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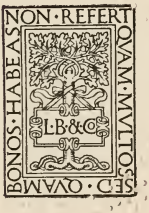
THE FIDDLER'S HOUSE: THE LAND: THOMAS MUSKERRY

THREE PLAYS

THE FIDDLER'S HOUSE
THE LAND
THOMAS MUSKERRY

BY

PADRAIC COLUM



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1916

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Published October, 1916

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TO MY FRIEND
THOMAS HUGHES KELLY
THESE THREE IRISH PLAYS

MAR 20 W'45

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I HAVE been asked to say something about the intentions and ideas that underlie the three short plays in this volume.

These plays were conceived in the early days of the Irish National Theatre. I had been one of the group that formed the National Theatre Society and I wrote plays for players who were my colleagues and my instructors; I wrote them for a small, barely-furnished stage in a small theatre; I wrote them, too, for an audience that was tremendously interested in every expression of national character. "The Land" was written to celebrate the redemption of the soil of Ireland — an event made possible by the Land Act of 1903. This event, as it represented the passing of Irish acres from an alien landlordism, was considered to be of national importance. "The Land" also dealt with a movement that ran counter to the rooting of the Celtic people in the soil — emigration — the emigration to America of the young and the fit. In "The Land" I tried to show that it was not altogether an economic necessity that was driving young men and women out of the Irish rural districts; the lack of life and the lack of freedom there had much to do with emigration.

"The Land" touched upon a typical conflict, the conflict between the individual and that which, in Ireland, has much authority, the family group. This particular conflict was shown again in "The Fiddler's House,"

where the life, not of the actual peasants, but of rural people with artistic and aristocratic traditions, was shown.

I tried to show the same conflict working out more tragically in the play of middle-class life, "Thomas Muskerry." Here I went above the peasant and the wandering artist and came to the official. I had intended to make plays about the merchant, the landowner, the political and the intellectual leader and so write a chapter in an Irish Human Comedy. But while I was thinking of the play that is third in this volume my connection with the National Theatre Society was broken off. "Thomas Muskerry" was produced in the Abbey Theatre after I had ceased to be a member of the group that had founded it.

PADRAIC COLUM

NEW YORK
August, 1916

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THE FIDDLER'S HOUSE

CHARACTERS

Conn Hourican, a Fiddler.
Maire (Mary)[1] Hourican, his daughter.
Anne Hourican, a younger daughter.
Brian MacConnell, a younger farmer.
James Moynihan, a farmer's son.

The action passes in the Houricans' house in the Irish Midlands.

[1] The name is pronounced as if written "Maurya."

ACT I

SCENE: *The interior of a farmer's cottage; the kitchen. The entrance is at the back right. To the left is the fire-place, an open hearth, with a fire of peat. There is a room door to the right, a pace below the entrance; and another room door below the fire-place. Between the room door and the entrance there is a row of wooden pegs, on which men's coats hang. Below this door is a dresser containing pretty delph. There is a small window at back, a settle bed folded into a high bench; a small mirror hangs right of the window. A backed chair and some stools are about the hearth. A table to the right with cloth and tea things on it. The cottage looks pretty and comfortable. It is towards the close of an Autumn day.*

James Moynihan has finished tea; Anne Hourican is at the back, seated on the settle knitting, and watching James. James Moynihan is about twenty-eight. He has a good forehead, but his face is indeterminate. He has been working in the fields, and is dressed in trousers, shirt, and heavy boots. Anne Hourican is a pretty, dark-haired girl of about nineteen.

James Moynihan rises.

ANNE

And so you can't stay any longer, James?

JAMES (*with a certain solemnity*)

No, Anne. I told my father I'd be back while there was light, and I'm going back. (*He goes to the rack, takes his coat, and puts it on him*) Come over to our

house to-night, Anne. I'll be watching the girls coming in, and thinking on yourself; there's none of them your match for grace and favour. My father wanted me to see a girl in Arvach. She has three hundred pounds, besides what the priest, her uncle, will leave her. "Father," says I, "listen to me now. Haven't I always worked for you like a steady, useful boy?" "You have," says he. "Did I ever ask you for anything unreasonable?" says I. "No," says he. "Well then," says I, "don't ask me to do unreasonable things. I'm fond of Anne Hourican, and not another girl will I marry. What's money, after all?" says I, "there's gold on the whin-bushes if you only knew it." And he had to leave it at that.

ANNE

You always bring people around.

JAMES

The quiet, reasonable way is the way that people like.

ANNE

Still, with all, I'm shy of going into your house.

JAMES

Don't doubt but there'll be a welcome before you; come round with Maire.

[*Anne rises, and comes to him. She has graceful, bird-like movements.*

ANNE (*putting her hands on James' shoulders*)

Maybe we won't have a chance of seeing each other after all.

[*James Moynihan kisses her reverently.*

JAMES

Sit down now, Anne, because there's something I want to show you. Do you ever see "The Shamrock"?

ANNE

Very seldom.

[*James and Anne go to the settle; they sit down.*

JAMES

There be good pieces in it sometimes. There's a poem of mine in it this week.

ANNE

Of yours, James? Printed, do you mean?

JAMES

Ay, printed. (*He takes a paper out of his pocket, and opens it*) It's a poem to yourself, though your name doesn't come into it. (*Gives paper*) Let no one see it, Anne, at least not for the present. And now, good-bye.

[*Goes to the door. Anne continues reading the verse eagerly. At the door James turns and recites: —*

When lights are failing, and skies are paling,
And leaves are sailing a-down the air,
O, it's then that love lifts my heart above
My roving thoughts and my petty care;
And though the gloom be like the tomb,
Where there's no room for my love and me,
O, still I'll find you, and still I'll bind you,
My wild sweet rose of Aughnalee!

That's the first stanza. Good-bye.

[*James goes out. Anne continues reading, then she leaves the paper down with a sigh.*

ANNE

O, it's lovely! (*She takes the paper up again, rises and goes to the door. She remains looking out. Some one speaks to her*) No, Brian, Maire's not back yet. Ay, I'll engage she'll give you a call when she does come back. (*Anne turns back. She opens drawer in*

the dresser and puts paper in. She begins to clear table, putting the delph back on dresser. To herself, anxiously) I hope Maire won't forget to call at the mill. (*Room door right opens, and Conn Hourican comes down. Conn Hourican is a man of about fifty, with clear-cut, powerful features, his face is clean-shaven, his expression vehement. His dress is old-fashioned. He wears knee-breeches, a frieze coat rather long, a linen shirt with a little linen collar and a black string for bow. He carries a stick and moves about restlessly*)

ANNE

Had Maire any talk of going to the mill, father?

CONN

I heard nothing of it.

ANNE

I hope she'll mind of it. We must get the meal there, and not be going to the shop so often.

CONN

I suppose we must.

[*He moves about restlessly.*

ANNE

And I was just thinking that one of us ought to go to Arvach on Tuesday, and get the things there.

CONN

The mean, odious creatures!

[*Anne is startled. She turns from dresser.*

ANNE

What are you thinking of, father?

CONN

That den of robbers. Well, well, I'm finished with them now; but I'm a proud man, and a passionate man, and I'll be even with them yet.

ANNE

There's no comfort in going into rough places.

CONN

You know nothing at all about it. Were the men in yet?

ANNE

James Moynihan was here, because he had to go away early; but Brian MacConnell is outside still. Father, you were home late two nights this week.

CONN

And is a man to have no life to himself? But sure you know nothing at all about it. I'm going out now to give Brian MacConnell a hand.

ANNE

It's hardly worth while going out now.

CONN

There's still light enough to do a bit of mowing, and you ought to know that it isn't right to neglect the boy that's come to do a day's work with you. (*Going to the door*) Many's the day I put in with the scythe in Ireland, and in England too; I did more than stroll with the fiddle, and I saw more places than where fiddling brought me. (*Brian MacConnell comes to the door*) I was just going out to you, Brian. I was telling the girl here that it's not right to neglect the boy that's giving you a day's work out of his own goodness.

BRIAN

I'm only coming in for a light.

CONN

As you're here now, rest yourself.

[*Brian MacConnell comes in, and goes over to the hearth. He is dark and good-looking, and has some-*

thing reckless in his look. He wears corduroy trousers, and a shirt loose at the neck. Anne comes to Brian. Conn stands at entrance, his back turned.

BRIAN (*lighting his pipe with a coal*)

When do you expect Maire back?

ANNE

She'll be here soon. She'll give you a call if you're outside.

BRIAN

How is it you couldn't keep James Moynihan?

ANNE

It's because you didn't say the good word for me, I must think. Be sure you praise me the next time you're working together.

BRIAN

Will you do as much for me?

ANNE

Indeed, I will, Brian. Myself and another are making a devotion to Saint Anthony.

BRIAN

And what would that be for?

ANNE

That the Saint might send us good comrades.

BRIAN

I thought it was Saint Joseph did that for the girls.

ANNE

Sure we couldn't be asking the like from him. We couldn't talk to Saint Joseph that way. We want a nice young saint to be looking at.

[*Conn turns from the door.*

CONN (*bitterly*)

It'll be a poor season, Brian MacConnell.

BRIAN

The season's not so bad, after all.

CONN

God help them that are depending on the land and the weather for the bit they put into their heads. It's no wonder that the people here are the sort they are, harassed, anxious people.

ANNE

The people here mind their own business, and they're a friendly people besides.

CONN

People that would leave the best fiddler at the fair to go and look at a bullock.

ANNE (*to Brian*)

He's not satisfied to have this shelter, Brian.

CONN (*to Brian*)

I'm saying, Brian, that her mother had this shelter, and she left it to go the roads with myself.

ANNE

That God may rest my mother. It's a pity she never lived to come back to the place. But we ought to be praising grandmother night and day, for leaving this place to Maire.

CONN

Your grandmother did that as she did everything else.

ANNE (*to Brian*)

Now, Brian, what would you do with a man that would say the like?

[*Anne goes outside.*

CONN (*to Brian*)

It's small blame to the girl here for thinking something of the place; but I saw the time, Brian Mac-

Connell, when I could make more playing at one fair than working a whole season in this bit of a place.

BRIAN

Girls like the shelter, Conn.

CONN

Ay, but the road for the fiddler. I'm five years settled here, and I come to be as well known as the begging ass, and there is as much thought about me. Fiddling, let me tell you, isn't like a boy's whistling. It can't be kept up on nothing.

BRIAN

I understand that, Conn.

CONN

I'm getting that I can't stand the talk you hear in houses, wars and Parliaments, and the devil knows what *ramais*.

BRIAN

There's still a welcome for the man of art, somewhere.

CONN

That somewhere's getting further and further away, Brian.

BRIAN

You were not in the town last night?

CONN

I was not, Brian. God help me, I spent the night my lone.

BRIAN

There's Sligomen in the town.

CONN

Is there, now? It would be like oul' times to play for them. (*Anne comes in with some peat*) Anne, would you bring me down my spectacles? They're

in the room, daughter. (*Anne goes to room. Conn turns to Brian eagerly*) I suppose the Sligomen will be in Flynn's.

BRIAN

They were there last night.

CONN

Listen, Brian, I've a reason for not going to Flynn's. Would you believe it, Brian, Flynn spoke to me about the few shillings I owe him?

BRIAN

That was shabby of him. He got a lot out of you in the way of playing.

CONN

It's just like them. Besides, Maire keeps us tight enough, and I often have to take treats from the men. They're drovers and rambling labourers and the like, though, as you say, they've the song and music, and the proper talk. Listen, Brian, could you leave a few shillings on the dresser for me?

BRIAN

To be sure I will, Conn.

[*Brian goes to the dresser, and puts money on a shelf.*

CONN (*with dignity*)

Thank you, Brian. There's few I'd let put me under a compliment; but I take it from you. Maire, as I said, is a careful girl, but some of us must have our freedom. Besides, Brian, the bird that sings lone sings slow. The man of art must have his listeners. (*Conn takes the money off dresser*) Anne, daughter, what's keeping you there? Sure the spectacles were in my pocket the whole time, child. (*Anne comes down*) When I spoke against the people about here, I was leaving you out of it, Brian.

BRIAN

I'm fond of tune, though it wasn't here I got fond of it.

[*Brian goes to the door.*

ANNE (*going to Brian*)

You won't be rambling again, Brian?

BRIAN

I'm settled here, Anne; I made it up with my brothers.

ANNE

They used to say that a MacConnell quarrel was a lasting quarrel.

BRIAN

Maybe we're working the bad blood out of us.

ANNE

Don't be staying out long, Brian.

BRIAN

Till Maire gives me the call.

[*Brian MacConnell goes out.*

ANNE

We oughtn't to take another day from Brian MacConnell. There's only the patch at the back to be mown, and you could do that yourself.

CONN

You can depend on me for the mowing. I'm going up now, to go over an oul' tune I have.

ANNE

James Moynihan would come over and stack for us.

CONN

James Moynihan is a decent boy, too.

ANNE

You won't be going out to-night, father?

CONN

Now, how's a man to know what he'll be doing?

ANNE

It leaves me very anxious.

CONN

I'll give you this advice, and it's proper advice to give to a girl thinking of marrying. Never ask of your menkind where they're going.

ANNE

The like of that brings bad luck on a house.

CONN

You have too much dead knowledge, and the shut fist never caught a bird.

ANNE

I only wish you were settled down.

CONN

Sure I am settled down.

ANNE

I can't speak to you, after all.

CONN

You're a good girl, Anne, and he'll be lucky that gets you. And don't be grieving that you're not bringing James Moynihan a fortune. You're bringing him the decency of birth and rearing. You're like the lone pigeon I often think — the pet that doesn't fly, and keeps near the house.

ANNE

That's the way you always treat me, and I never can talk to you.

CONN (*at window*)

Hush now, here's the other, your sister Maire. She's like the wild pigeon of the woods. (*Maire Hourican comes in*) We were discoursing on affairs, Maire. We won't be bringing Brian MacConnell here to-

morrow; there's only the bit at the back to be mown, and I'll do that myself.

[*Conn Hourican goes into the room right; soon after the fiddle is heard. Anne goes to the settle, and takes up her knitting. Maire takes her shawl off, and hangs it on the rack. Maire Hourican is over twenty. She is tall, and has easy, graceful movements; her features are fine and clear-cut; the nose is rather blunted, the mouth firm. Her gaze is direct and clear. She has heavy auburn hair, loose now, and falling. Maire comes down to the table, opens basket, and takes some flowers from top. She turns to dresser and arranges some of the flowers in a jar.*

MAIRE

We'd have no right to take another day from Brian. And when there's no one here to-morrow, you and me could draw some of the turf.

ANNE

Your hair is loose, Maire.

[*Maire goes to the mirror and fixes her hair.*

MAIRE

The wind blew it about me, and then I let it down. I came home by the long way, just to feel young again with my hair about me.

ANNE

And did you meet any one?

MAIRE

Indeed I did. I met James Moynihan.

ANNE

James had to go early. They're building at his place.

MAIRE

Indeed they ought to let James build a house for himself.

ANNE

Some day they will, Maire.

MAIRE

But we must not let some day be a far day.

ANNE (*hesitatingly*)

I think I'll show you something.

MAIRE

What is it, daughter?

[*Anne rises and goes to the dresser. She opens drawer. Maire watches her.*

MAIRE (*waiting*)

I made a good girl out of you, anyway.

ANNE

You wouldn't let me use stroller words when we were on the road. Do you mind of that?

MAIRE

I kept you to the mannerly ways. I have that to my credit.

ANNE (*showing Maire the verses*)

Read that, Maire. It was James that made it.

MAIRE

It's a song, I declare.

ANNE

No, Maire, it's a poem.

MAIRE

A poem? O, that's grand!

[*She begins to read it eagerly.*

ANNE

And, Maire —

MAIRE

Well?

ANNE

James says it's about me.

MAIRE

About you? O, I wish some one would put me into a song, or into a poem; I suppose a poem would be best. You might ask James. No, I'll coax him myself. Ah, no I won't, Anne.

ANNE

You may keep it for a while, but don't let any one know.

MAIRE

He must be very fond of you, and I thinking him so quiet.

ANNE (*happy*)

He has grand thoughts about me.

MAIRE

Well, you'll be seeing him to-night.

ANNE

I don't know that I'll go out to-night.

MAIRE

Sure Grace Moynihan asked us to go over.

ANNE

I'm shy of going into James'.

MAIRE

Anne, you're the only one of us that has any manners. Maybe you're right not to go.

ANNE

I'll stay in to-night.

MAIRE

Then Brian and myself will go to Moynihan's.

ANNE

You'd get an indulgence, Maire, if you missed a dance.

MAIRE

Would it be so hard to get an indulgence? (*She takes*

flowers from dresser and puts them in window) The house looks nice this evening. We'll keep Brian here for a while, and then we'll go to Moynihan's.

ANNE

Father will be going out to-night.

MAIRE (*turning suddenly from window*)

Will he?

ANNE

He will. I think I ought to stay in. Maire, father was in only a while before you the night before last and another night.

MAIRE

O, and I thinking things were going so well with us. He's drinking again.

ANNE

He's going to Flynn's again.

MAIRE

Disgracing us again.

ANNE

I'll stay in to-night.

MAIRE

I'm tired of this.

ANNE

Don't say it that way, Maire.

MAIRE

What will people say of us two now?

ANNE

I'll talk to him to-night.

MAIRE

No, you're going out — you're going to Moynihan's — you're going to see your sweetheart.

ANNE

I think you're becoming a stranger to us, Maire.

MAIRE

You're going to Moynihan's to-night, and I'm going, too. But I'm going to settle this first. Once and for all I'm going to settle this.

[*The fiddle has ceased. As Maire goes towards the room, Conn Hourican comes down, the fiddle in his hand.*

CONN

Were you listening to the tune I was playing? Ah, that was a real oul' tune, if there was anyone that knew it. Maire, my jewel, were you listening?

MAIRE

I heard you.

CONN

It was a real oul' tune, and while I was playing it a great scheme came into my head. Now, listen to me, Maire; and you listen, too, Anne. Both of you would like to see your father having what's his due after all, honour and respect.

MAIRE

Both of us would like to see our father earn the same.

CONN

I could earn the same, ay, and gold and silver cups besides, if I had the mind to earn them.

[*He puts fiddle on table and prepares to speak impressively.*

CONN

Let ye listen to me now; I've a scheme to put before ye. When I was going over the oul' tune, I remembered that I'd heard of a Feis[1] that's coming on soon,

[1] Feis, pronounced Fesh, a musical or literary gathering, with competitions.

the Feis of Ardagh. I'm thinking of going there. There will be great prizes for some one; I don't doubt but I'd do at Ardagh better than I did at the Feis of Granard, where people as high as bishops were proud and glad to know Conn Hourican the Fiddler.

ANNE

Father, you've a place to mind.

CONN

I'm tired of that kind of talk; sure I'm always thinking of the place. Maire hasn't little notions. What do you say to it, Maire, my girl?

MAIRE

What do I say? I say you're not a rambler now, though indeed you behave like one.

CONN

You have something against me, Maire.

MAIRE

I have.

CONN

What has she against me, Anne?

MAIRE

All the promises you broke.

CONN

You were listening to what the town is saying.

MAIRE

What does the town know? Does it know that you stripped us of stock and crop the year after we came here? Does it know that Anne and myself, two girls of the roads, had to struggle ever since to keep a shelter?

CONN (*bitterly*)

It knows that.

MAIRE

It couldn't help but know it, maybe. But does it know all the promises you made and broke?

CONN (*angrily*)

Hush now; I'll hear no more. I went my own way always, and I'll go my own way always.

[*He goes to the entrance, and remains with his back turned. Maire goes to Anne.*

MAIRE (*raising her voice*)

Ay, he'll go his own way always. What was the good of working and saving here?

ANNE

Be quiet with him.

MAIRE

He'll go his own way always, and it's foolish of us to be fretting for him night and day.

[*Maire sits on stool and puts her hands across her face.*

CONN (*turning his head*)

Fretting for me. It was too easy that I reared you.

ANNE

God help Maire! She kept the house together at the worst, and she is always fretting for us.

CONN

I'm oul' enough to mind myself. Let her remember that.

ANNE

It's you that ought to remember that.

CONN (*going to Maire*)

Did I ever give the harsh word to you, child?

[*No answer.*

CONN

There, there; I never could see tears in a woman's

eyes; there, there, colleen. I'm an oul' man; I won't be a trouble to you long.

MAIRE (*rising*)

Why need you play in Flynn's? You're as good as any that goes there.

CONN

I know that. I'm disgusted with Flynn. May hell loosen his knees for him! I'll go in and throw his money on the counter.

MAIRE

Some one else can do that. Promise me you won't go near the place.

CONN

You'll have me promise. I promise.

MAIRE

Take this in your hand and promise. It's a medal that belonged to mother.

[*She takes a medal from her neck.*

CONN (*taking the medal*)

I'm disgusted with Flynn. I promise you, Maire.

MAIRE

Now you've honour and respect.

CONN

And what about Ardagh, Maire?

MAIRE

Sure, you're not the rambling fiddler any more.

CONN

That would be the good rambling. I see the trees making shadows across the roads.

MAIRE

We'll talk about it again.

ANNE

Brian MacConnell will be coming in now.

CONN

I'm going out to Brian MacConnell.

[*He goes to the door.*

ANNE

Tell Brian to come in now.

[*Conn Hourican goes out. There is a pause. Maire hums a tune as she goes to the mirror.*

MAIRE

Am I looking well to-day?

ANNE (*rather distantly*)

You're looking your best, I think. (*Seriously*) Maire, I didn't like the way you talked to father.

MAIRE (*petulantly*)

What have you against it?

ANNE

You're becoming a stranger to us, Maire.

MAIRE (*as an apology*)

I'm out often, I know, but I think as much as ever of the house, and about you and father. You know we couldn't let him go to the Feis at Ardagh. We couldn't let him go off like a rambling fiddler.

ANNE

We couldn't let him go off by himself.

MAIRE

You're going to Moynihan's.

ANNE

Maybe I'll go.

MAIRE

Anne, honey, do something for me.

ANNE

What will I do?

MAIRE

You'll meet father coming up with Brian, and take him away.

ANNE

And will you tell me everything to-night?

MAIRE

Who else would I talk to but yourself, Nancy? (*Anne goes out*) I wish Anne hadn't spoken to me like that. I feel the like of that. (*Desperately*) Well, I'll pray for nothing now but to look my best. (*She goes to the fire. Brian MacConnell comes in*) You're welcome, Brian.

BRIAN

We didn't finish to-day. I'll come in to-morrow and finish.

MAIRE

O no, Brian, we won't take another day from you.

BRIAN

Well, what's a day after all? Many's the day and night I put in thinking on you.

MAIRE

But did you do what I asked you to do?

BRIAN

I did. I made it up with my brothers. It was never my way before. What I wanted I took with the strong hand; or if I mightn't put the strong hand on it, I left it alone.

MAIRE (*eagerly*)

Tell me what your brother said to you.

BRIAN

When I came up to the door, Hugh came out to meet me. "What destruction are you bringing me?" he said. "There's my hand," says I, "and I take your offer."

MAIRE

Ah, that's settled. You could settle anything, Brian. (*She goes to the settle and sits down*) I wonder could you settle something for us?

BRIAN

What is it, Maire?

MAIRE

It's my father. He wants to be rambling again. He wants to be going to some Feis.

BRIAN

Sure, let him go.

[*He takes her hand.*

MAIRE

I couldn't, Brian. Couldn't you help us? Couldn't you keep father's mind on the right things?

BRIAN

Sure, let the fiddler go on the roads.

MAIRE

You might stay here this evening with ourselves. Father would be glad to talk with you.

BRIAN (*putting his arm around her*)

But I want the two of us to be seen in Moynihan's to-night.

MAIRE (*resistance in her voice*)

Stay here with us, and let all that go by.

BRIAN

Hugh will be there with that woman that brought him the big fortune; and I want you to take the shine out of her.

MAIRE (*rising*)

I was out often lately. You know that, Brian.

[*She goes to chair at table, and sits away from him.*

BRIAN (*rising and going to her*)

But this night above all you must be with me.

MAIRE (*turning to him impulsively*)

Stay here and I'll be as nice to you as if we were in another house. (*He kisses her. She rises and goes from him*) If you knew me at all, Brian MacConnell, that's not the way you'd treat me.

BRIAN

Are you not coming out with me?

MAIRE

You must leave me to myself now. (*Conn Hourican comes in*) Is Anne with you, father?

CONN

She's gathering posies or something like that. Brian, did you hear about the Feis at Ardagh?

MAIRE (*with vehemence*)

Oh, what's the good of talking about that? You can't go.

CONN

Can't go, did you say, girl?

MAIRE

Oh, how could you go?

CONN

Is that the way? Well, God help us. Give me that fiddle till I leave it up.

[*He takes the fiddle off dresser, and turns to go.*

MAIRE

Father, let me be with you to-night; oh, I'm sorry if I vexed you. (*No reply*) Well, stay with Brian MacConnell; I'm going out to Anne.

[*Maire goes out. Brian goes to rack, and puts on his coat.*

BRIAN

Are you coming, Conn? I'm off.

CONN

Where to, man?

BRIAN

To Flynn's.

CONN

I can't be going, I'm sorry to say.

BRIAN

I'm going anyway. It's a great thing to be in the company of men.

CONN

Ay, in troth. Women, Brian, leave the heart of one very lonesome.

BRIAN (*masterfully*)

Why can't you come out? I thought you were going to-night.

CONN

I can't, Brian, and that reminds me. Give these few shillings to Flynn for me. I'll owe them to you still.

BRIAN

I'm not going to be bothered by the like. Why can't you come?

CONN

I promised Maire.

[*Brian strides away. He turns, comes back deliberately, and sits on table beside Conn.*

BRIAN

They'll be all looking out for you at Flynn's.

CONN

Well, the next time they see me they may respect me.

BRIAN

Some of the boys will take it very unkindly.

CONN

They're decent enough fellows, some of them.

BRIAN

And above all nights they'll be watching out for you this night, on account of the Sligomen.

CONN

They're decent enough fellows, as I said, and I'll be sorry to disappoint them.

BRIAN

The Sligomen will have great stories about Shawn Heffernan.

CONN

Shawn Heffernan! Is that impostor still alive?

BRIAN

He is, and for fiddling these Sligomen think there's not the like of him in the whole of Ireland.

CONN

God help them if that's all they know. We played against each other at the Granard Feis. He got the prize, but everybody knew that it was me played the best.

BRIAN

There's few of them alive now that mind of the Granard Feis. He got the prize, and there's no talk of you at all.

CONN

No talk of me at all?

BRIAN

It's said that since you settled down you lost your art.

CONN

And what had the men at Flynn's to say about that?

BRIAN

They bragged about you for a while, but the Sligomen put them down.

CONN

I wonder would we have time to go up, play a few tunes, and come back, while Maire would be doing something? It would be a pity not to give them fellows a lesson and close their ignorant mouths for them. I wonder would we have time? (*Anne comes in with Maire*) I thought you went somewhere and left Brian and myself here.

ANNE

We're going somewhere and Brian might come with us.

MAIRE

Every one is going to Moynihan's.

CONN

It's a pleasant house, a pleasant house. Brian will make his *ceilidh*[1] with me. We might go over a few tunes.

ANNE

Let Brian come where there are girls that might miss him.

MAIRE

Anne, you're a great one for keeping up the story that girls are always thinking about men.

ANNE

And so they are. Just as men are always thinking about girls.

MAIRE

You'd make a good ribbonman.[2] You'd put a face on anything you said.

[1] Celidh, pronounced cayley, a visit.

[2] A ribbonman — a member of a secret agrarian society.

ANNE

Ribbonism and secret societies were denounced off the altar.

MAIRE

Goodness! The men will begin to think they've secrets worth telling.

ANNE

Have you secrets worth telling, Brian?

MAIRE

I daresay he has. There are foolish women in the world.

ANNE

Are you coming to Moynihan's, Brian?

BRIAN

No. I'm going where there's men.

MAIRE

Come, Anne, till I deck you out. Come here, daughter, don't wear flowers. I think they're unlucky. Here I am talking like this, and I going to a dance. I suppose I'll dance with seven or eight and forget what's on my mind. . . . Everyone is going to Moynihan's except the men here. Are you going out, father?

CONN

I'm making a *ceilidh* with Brian.

MAIRE

Well, God be with you both. Come on, Anne.

[*Maire takes down her shawl, and puts it over her head. She stands at the door, watching Anne, who goes to Brian.*

ANNE

Brian, what have you against Moynihan's?

BRIAN

Nothing at all. I may go in.

MAIRE

Come on, Anne. God be with you both.

[*Maire and Anne go out. They are heard talking for a while. Conn goes to the door.*

CONN

Maire and Anne are turning the bohereen.[1] Come on now.

[*He takes his fiddle and begins to wrap it up eagerly.*

BRIAN

Ay, let's go.

CONN (*at door*)

I never forget, I never forget. The Granard Feis is as fresh in my mind as the day I played at it. Shawn Heffernan, indeed! I never forget. I never forget.

[*Conn Hourican and Brian MacConnell go out.*

[1] Bohereen — the little path going from the cottage to the main road.

CURTAIN

ACT II

The next day: The scene is as in previous Act. It is now in the forenoon. Maire Hourican is seated at the fire in a listless attitude. Anne is busy at the dresser. Maire rises.

MAIRE

We shouldn't have stayed at Moynihan's so late.

ANNE

Indeed it would have been better to go home, but I was sure that Brian MacConnell would come in.

MAIRE

Well, it was his own loss if he didn't come. Maybe there was one there that I liked better.

ANNE

You couldn't have liked Connor Gilpatrick better than Brian MacConnell.

MAIRE

Connor's the best-looking boy in the country. Was it noticed that we were together often?

ANNE (*significantly*)

Peggy Carroll noticed it.

MAIRE

Well, the boy was glad to talk to me. Connor's a good dancer, and he has fine talk besides. If Brian MacConnell had come to the door, I wouldn't have turned my head towards him.

ANNE

Sure, you wouldn't compare a young boy like Connor Gilpatrick with Brian MacConnell?

MAIRE

I wouldn't have turned my head towards Brian. O! never expect kindness from men. Why did you let me stay on? I'm afraid to look at myself in the glass to-day. (*She goes over to the mirror*) You were hard on me, Anne, yesterday.

ANNE

I didn't like the way you talked to father.

MAIRE

I think I'm getting different to what I used to be. Well, I've reason to be sorry for what I did yesterday. (*She is at window*) Was Peggy Carroll vexed at the way I went on?

ANNE

She never took her eyes off the pair of you. You know she's very fond of Connor.

MAIRE

Anne, never remind me of my foolishness. I'm heart-sick of myself to-day.

ANNE

I'll comb out your hair for you, and you'll look well enough.

MAIRE

Then you're expecting Brian MacConnell?

ANNE

It's likely he'll come in to see if there's anything to be done.

MAIRE

I suppose he'll come in. Gracious, how did father get out? He's coming up the path.

ANNE (*coming to Maire*)

Father's not up, surely? Maire, be easy with Brian MacConnell when he comes in.

MAIRE

Father's coming up the path. Anne!

ANNE

What is it, Maire?

MAIRE

Father wasn't in at all, last night.

ANNE

Then he went to Flynn's, after all.

MAIRE

Ay, he went to Flynn's.

[*She goes to Anne.*

ANNE

O Maire, what will become of us all?

MAIRE

I don't know.

[*Maire goes to the settle, and sits down.*

ANNE

What will we do with him at all?

[*Conn Hourican comes in.*

CONN

God save you! (*He looks around*) Well, I came back to ye.

ANNE

You did, God help us! And we depending on you. It's the bad way you always treated us.

CONN

Did you hear what happened to me, before you attack me?

ANNE

What happened to you? What always happens to you?

CONN

I wonder that a man comes in at all! The complaints

against him are like the Queen's Speech, prepared beforehand.

ANNE

Ever since I can remember, you treated us like that. Bringing us into drinking-places and we little. It's well we got to know anything, or got into the way of being mannerly at all.

CONN

You know too much. I always said that. Is James Moynihan coming here to-day?

ANNE

No, he isn't coming here to-day.

CONN

Well, we can do without him. There's something to be done to-day. I said I'd do the bit of mowing, and I was thinking of that all along. (*He looks at Maire*) Did you hear what happened to me, Maire?

MAIRE

It's no matter at all.

CONN

I went over to Flynn's, I may tell you.

ANNE

In troth we might have known that.

CONN

But did you hear what happened to me?

ANNE

How could we hear? It was Maire went to the door, and there you were coming up the path; and we thinking you were in bed, resting yourself.

CONN

I went over to Flynn's, but I had good reason for going there. (*He puts the fiddle down on the table*) Didn't you hear there were Sligomen in the town,

Maire? Well, one of them was in the way of rewarding the prizes. I told you about the Feis; well, it's no matter now, I'll say no more about that. At all events the man I mentioned wanted to know what music was in the country, so he sent a message to myself.

ANNE (*as satirical as she can be*)

That was kind of him.

CONN

It was. I could do no less than go. I'll rest myself now, and then get ready for the mowing. (*He goes to the room door; he turns again and watches Maire*) Maire, I'm sorry you weren't on the spot. You might have advised me. I couldn't think of where you went or I'd have followed you. I had to make haste.

MAIRE

It's no matter at all now.

CONN

I'll stretch myself on the bed before I begin work. Anne, did you say you were leaving something in the room for me?

ANNE

I suppose I'll have to leave the tea in the room for you.

[*She gets the tea ready. Maire remains motionless.*

CONN

Well, I have the pattern of daughters, anyway. I wouldn't give this house for the praise of Ireland, no, not if they carried me on their backs. (*Anne takes the tea up to the room*) It's a pity you weren't there, Maire, though of course I wouldn't bring you into such a place. But they were decent fellows, decent,

warm-hearted fellows. If you were to see their faces when I played *An Chailin Donn.* I'll warrant they'll be whistling it, though they never heard the tune before. And the manners they have! I offered the fiddle to one of them. "No," says he, "not a string will I touch while the master of us is here." That's something like the spirit. (*Maire has turned to him and is attentive*) But there, I won't fill myself up with false music telling you about it all.

[*He turns to the room.*

MAIRE

Bring up your fiddle.

CONN (*taking fiddle and going towards room again*)

It will be as good as sound sleeping for me. I'll never forget it. Flynn will never forget it. It will be the making of Flynn.

[*Maire rises.*

MAIRE

You've only your fiddle; we shouldn't forget that.

[*Conn goes up to the room. Maire turns to the fire. Anne comes down.*

ANNE

O Maire, what will become of us at all?

MAIRE

He is very pleased with himself. He has only his fiddle, we shouldn't forget that.

ANNE

It will be a long time till he does the like again.

MAIRE

It will be a long time, I suppose. Both of us might be in a different house and have different cares.

ANNE

That would be terrible. I'll never leave him, Maire.

MAIRE

You can't say the like now.

ANNE

Why?

MAIRE

How could you take such things upon you and life stretching out before you? You're not young enough, Anne. Besides, it's not what we say; it's what we feel. No, it's not what we feel either; it's what grows up in us.

ANNE

He might never do the like again.

MAIRE

Many's the time mother said that, and she and me lying together.

ANNE

Will we ever get out of it, Maire?

[*James enters.*

MAIRE

You have only a while to stay with us.

ANNE

O James, what will your father say if he hears of you giving us another day?

JAMES

My father took a stick in his hand this morning, and went off with himself.

MAIRE

You're welcome, James. It was a pleasant time we had in your house last evening.

JAMES

I hope you liked the company, Maire. I'm afraid there was very little to be called refined or scholarly,

and the conversation at times was homely enough. But we did our best, and we were proud to see you.

MAIRE

Sit down, James.

[*James sits on chair, near table. Maire is seated at fire, left of James. Anne leans against table, right of him.*

JAMES

Your father is outside, maybe?

MAIRE

No. He's above in the room.

JAMES

Yes. Practising, I suppose. Them that have the gift have to mind the gift. In this country there isn't much thought for poetry, or music, or scholarship. Still, a few of us know that a while must be spared from the world if we are to lay up riches in the mind.

ANNE

I hope there's nothing wrong at home?

JAMES (*turning to Anne*)

To tell you the truth, Anne, and to keep nothing back, there is.

MAIRE

And what is it, James?

JAMES (*turning to Maire*)

Anne was talking to my father last night.

ANNE

Indeed I was, and I thought him very friendly to me.

JAMES

Ay, he liked you well enough, I can tell you that, Anne. This morning when he took a stick in his hand, I knew he was making ready for a journey, for

the horse is laid up. "Walk down a bit with me," said he, "and we'll go over a few things that are in my mind." Well, I walked down with him, and indeed we had a serious conversation.

ANNE

Well?

JAMES

"Anne Hourican is too young," said my father; "she's a nice girl, and a good girl, but she's too young."

MAIRE

Sure in a while Anne will be twenty.

JAMES (*turning to Maire*)

Ten years from this father would still think Anne too young. And late marriages, as everybody knows, is the real weakness of the country.

ANNE

I thought your father liked me.

JAMES

He likes you well enough, but, as he says, "what would she be doing here and your sisters years older than herself?" There's truth in that, mind you. I always give in to the truth.

MAIRE

James?

JAMES (*turning to Maire*)

Well, Maire?

MAIRE

Is Anne a girl to be waiting twenty years for a man, like Sally Cassidy?

JAMES

God forbid, Maire Hourican, that I'd ask your sister to wait that length.

MAIRE

She hasn't got a fortune. We were brought up different to farmers, and maybe we never gave thought to the like.

JAMES

She has what's better than a fortune.

MAIRE

Why aren't your sisters married off?

JAMES

Big fortunes are expected with them.

MAIRE

And they look to your wife to bring a big fortune into the house?

JAMES

Ay, they do that.

MAIRE

You, James, ought to have some control in the house. You're the only son. Your father is well off. Get him to fortune off your sisters, and then bring Anne to the house.

JAMES

But how could I get father to fortune off the girls?

MAIRE

How? By wakening up. You have the right. When we have the right, we ought to be able to do anything we like with the people around us.

JAMES

I give in to the truth of that, Maire.

MAIRE

What will come of you giving in to the truth of it? But sure you ought to remember, Anne.

ANNE (*taking James's hand*)

James has the good way with people.

MAIRE

Well, I suppose it will come out right for you in the end. You are both very deserving. (*She rises*) But some time or another we have to take things into our own hands.

JAMES

Indeed that's true, Maire.

[*Maire goes to back.*

ANNE (*holding James's hand*)

Did you make any more songs, James?

JAMES

I have a song in my head since last night.

ANNE

The one in the paper is lovely. I know it by heart.

JAMES

The next I make will be ten times better.

[*Conn Hourican comes down.*

CONN

I heard your voice, James, and I thought I'd come down. It's very good of you to come here again. I'll be out with you to-day.

JAMES

It'll be a good day from this on. Were you practising above, Mister Hourican?

CONN

Well, no, James, I wasn't practising. I was at a big gathering last night, and my hands are unstrung like. We'll talk for a while, and then I'll go out with you.

ANNE (*taking James's arm*)

Come out with me for a minute, James.

JAMES (*going off*)

I'll see you again, Mister Hourican.

[*James and Anne go out.*

CONN

Well, God help us. (*He turns to go back to the room. Maire comes down from back*) Are you going out, Maire?

MAIRE

No, I'm staying here.

CONN (*aggrieved*)

Do you mind them two, how they went out together. I think I'll go out and see what's to be done about the place.

[*Conn goes towards the entrance. Maire goes towards the fire.*

CONN (*pausing at door*)

I broke my word to you, Maire.

MAIRE

I don't know what to say to you now.

CONN

It was the music and the strange faces that drew me.

MAIRE

I know that now.

CONN

It will be a long time till I break my word to you again.

MAIRE

I'll never ask for your word again.

CONN (*warmly*)

I can tell you this, Maire. There's many's the place in Ireland where Conn Hourican's word would be respected.

MAIRE

I'll never ask for your word again. You have only your fiddle, and you must go among people that will praise you. When I heard you talking of your lis-

teners, I knew that. I was frightened before that. When I saw you coming, I went and sat there, and I thought the walls of the house were crowding in on me.

CONN

You were partly to blame, Maire. You left me there very lonesome.

MAIRE

I was to blame, I suppose. I should have treated you differently. Well, I know you better now. Let you sit down and we'll talk together. (*Conn sits on chair to right of table*) What's to become of myself I don't know. Anne and James Moynihan will marry, I hope. Neither of us have fortunes, and for that reason our house should be well spoken of.

CONN

Sure I know that. I wouldn't bring the shadow of a disgrace near ye.

MAIRE

If the father isn't well spoken of, how could the house be well spoken of? They're big drinkers that go to Flynn's, and it's easy for the fiddler to get into the way of drinking.

CONN

I won't go to Flynn's when you put it that way.

MAIRE

I'll ask for no word. I'll let you know the real way of the house, and then trust you.

CONN

You're a good girl, Maire. I should have been said by you.

MAIRE

From this out there will be dances at the schoolhouse and the like of that. You could be playing at them.

CONN

None of the oul' people go to the like, and the young don't understand me nor my ways. God knows will I ever play again. That thought is often with me of late, and it makes me very lonesome.

MAIRE

That's foolishness.

CONN

I was very lonesome when you left me. You don't know how I was tempted, Maire. There was Brian MacConnell putting on his coat to go to Flynn's, and talking of the Sligomen.

MAIRE (*startled*)

And was it to Flynn's that Brian MacConnell went?

CONN

It was Brian that brought me to Flynn's.

MAIRE

Was it Brian MacConnell that brought you to Flynn's?

CONN

It was.

MAIRE (*passionately*)

You must never go to Flynn's.

CONN

I'm ashamed of myself. Didn't I say that, Maire?

MAIRE (*with hardness*)

You must never go again.

CONN

And is a man to have no life to himself?

MAIRE

That's talk just. It's time you thought of your own place and your own children. It's time you gave up caring for the praise of foolish people.

CONN

Foolish people, did you say?

MAIRE

Ay, foolish people. You had all your life to yourself, and you went here and there, straying from place to place, and caring only for the praise of foolish people.

CONN

God help you, if that's your way of thinking! Sure the world knows that a man is born with the gift, and isn't the gift then the sign of the grace of God? Foolish people, indeed! Them that know the gift have some of the grace of God, no matter how poor they may be.

MAIRE

You're always thinking of them. You never think of your own. Many's the time your own cried tears over your playing.

CONN (*passionately, starting up*)

I'll go out of the house.

MAIRE

Let you stay here.

CONN (*going towards entrance*)

I'll go out of the house, I tell you.

MAIRE

No.

[*Conn goes over to the fire.*

CONN

God help me that ever came into this country at all. (*He sits down on the armchair, his hands resting on his stick*) I had friends once, and was well thought of; I can tell you that, my daughter.

MAIRE

I know that.

CONN

Well, you can have your own way with me now.

MAIRE

Why can't you stay here? There's lots to be done here. Our fields are a laughing-stock to the neighbours, they're that poor and wasted. Let us put all our minds into working, and have a good place of our own.

CONN

Ay, and the grabbers and informers of this place would think well of you then.

MAIRE

Who do you call grabbers and informers?

CONN

The people of this place. The people *you* want to shine before.

MAIRE

I don't want to shine before the people.

CONN

I'm not saying against you, Maire.

MAIRE

You're wrong in thinking I want to shine at all.

CONN

Sure you go to every dance and ceilidh; and to every house where you can show off your face, and dancing, and conversation.

MAIRE

Do I? Maybe I do. Every girl does the like.

CONN

I'm not saying against it.

[*Pause.*

MAIRE

You think I'm like yourself, wanting the praise of the people.

CONN

And what's the harm if you do?

MAIRE

No harm at all. But I don't go to houses to show myself off.

CONN

Troth and you do, Maire.

[*He rises and goes towards the entrance, and remains looking out.*

MAIRE

I won't believe it.

[*She goes to the settle. Anne comes in. Anne goes to the glass to fix her hair.*

CONN

Had you a good night at Moynihan's, Anne?

ANNE

A sort of a good night.

CONN

I was going to tell you about a man I met last night. He had a song about your grandmother.

ANNE

Was grandmother a great beauty, father?

CONN

Honor Gilroy had good looks, and indeed she made the most of them.

MAIRE

It's likely there was some to tell her that she was showing off.

CONN

No one was to her liking unless they praised her.

ANNE

Ah well, a fiddler ought to forgive that to a woman.

MAIRE

Fiddlers and women are all alike, but don't say that to him.

[*Anne goes to Maire and sits beside her.*

CONN (*speaking to both*)

Well, Honor Gilroy wasn't the worst, maybe.

MAIRE

And fiddlers and women oughtn't be hard on each other.

CONN

Do you say that, Maire?

MAIRE (*rising and going to him*)

I say it, father.

CONN

God forgive me if I vexed you, Maire.

ANNE

It's clearing up now, father, and you ought to go out to James. (*Conn turns to the door. He remains in the doorway. Anne rises and goes to Maire*) What did you say to him?

MAIRE (*looking at Conn*)

He doesn't feel it at all. Father will always be the fiddler, no matter what we say.

ANNE

Maire. Come and talk to me. (*They sit at fire*) I was talking to James. He'll never be happy until we're under the one roof.

[*Maire clasps Anne's hands passionately.*

MAIRE (*with cry*)

Anne, daughter, I'll be very lonesome for you.

ANNE

But sure I won't be far off, Maire.

MAIRE

Ay, but it's terrible to face things alone.

[*James has come to the door. Conn and James have been talking. They turn in.*

CONN

But I'll be glad enough to have the scythe in my hands after it all, James.

JAMES

Anne was telling me how you took the victory from Connaught.

CONN

Still I'm sorry for him! That poor Heffernan! He'll never hold up his head again.

JAMES

Sure I'd have it in a ballad that would be sung in his own town. It would be well worth putting into a ballad.

CONN

Well indeed, it would make a right good ballad, James.

JAMES

I'd like to make a ballad about it, that would be sung all over Connaught.

CONN

And why wouldn't you do it, James Moynihan? Sure it would be the making of you. It would be sung all over Ireland, and your name to it. Do you hear that, Maire? Do you hear that, Anne?

JAMES

I'm saying that I'd like to do a ballad about your father's victory.

CONN

Maybe you could have it this night week, James?

ANNE

Will it be a poem or a ballad, James?

[*Anne goes to him.*

CONN

If you had it this night week, we could bring the boys to the place. What do you say to that, Maire? We'll bring the boys here this night week to hear James Moynihan's ballad.

MAIRE

I was thinking of the Feis at Ardagh.

CONN

The Feis at Ardagh?

MAIRE

Maybe you'll be going to it this night week.

CONN

Sure you're not joking with me, Maire?

MAIRE

No.

[*She rises.*

CONN

God forgive me, Maire, if I vexed you.

[*Maire goes up to Conn's room.*

CONN

Anne, jewel, had Maire anything to say about Ardagh?

ANNE

We weren't talking about that at all.

JAMES

Play me a rouse on the fiddle and maybe the ballad will come into my head.

[*Maire comes down, a fiddle in her hands.*

MAIRE

Here's the fiddle that was your favourite, the Granard fiddle.

CONN

And this is the fiddle I'll bring with me to Ardagh.

ANNE

And is he going to Ardagh?

JAMES

And what about the ballad, Mister Hourican?

CONN

I leave it all to Maire now. How well she bethought of the Granard fiddle.

MAIRE

Father, we were always together.

[*She hands him the fiddle. Conn, Maire, James, Anne, are at table.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

A week later: The scene is as in previous Acts. The table is near entrance. It is laid for a meal. The time is near sunset. Conn Hourican, Maire Hourican, and James Moynihan are seated at table. Maire Hourican rises. She goes to entrance and remains looking out. Conn and James go on eating.

CONN

However it is, I could never play my best in this place. The houses are too scattered, I often think. And it doesn't do for the fiddler to remain too long in the one place. The people get too used to him. Virgil made better songs than any man, but if Virgil was sung in the fairs constant, divil much heed would be given to his songs.

JAMES

Now, I often thought of that.

CONN

Another thing, James Moynihan, Ribbonism and the Land League ruined the country.

[*Maire goes out.*

JAMES

But sure we must be doing something for the Cause.

CONN

They were all Fenians here when I came into this country first, over twenty years ago.

[*He rises and goes into room.*

JAMES

Well, he's a great man, Conn Hourican. (*James rises*

and goes to fire. Conn comes out of room, carrying a greatcoat) How do you think you'll do at Ardagh?

CONN

I think I'll do very well at Ardagh, James.

[*He leaves coat on settle.*

JAMES

Everything's ready for the start.

CONN

Ay, and it's near time for going. I'm playing very well lately, James. It's the thought of being before people who'll know music. If I was staying in this place any longer, James, I'd put my fiddle in the thatch, and leave it there for the birds to pick holes in.

JAMES

But won't you be back here after the Feis at Ardagh?

CONN

Well, I will, for a while anyway.

JAMES

And would you be going off again after a while?

CONN

I'm thinking that when my daughters are settled I'll have the years before me. I was reared in a place south of this, and I'd like to go back there for a while.

JAMES

But wouldn't you come back to us?

CONN

There's many's the place in Ireland that I never saw, town and countryside. (*He takes the greatcoat off settle and puts it on him*) Tell me, James Moynihan, is your father satisfied with the settlement that Maire's making for yourself and Anne?

JAMES

My father is very well satisfied.

CONN (*going towards his room*)

And so he ought to be, James Moynihan.

[*Goes into his room.*

JAMES

My father had always a great liking for Anne. (*Anne comes out of the other room. James Moynihan goes to her*) May you never think, Anne, that you made the bad choice when you took James Moynihan.

[*They sit on settle.*

ANNE

Sure I was never fond of any one but yourself.

JAMES

And I never cared for any one after I saw you.

ANNE

I used to hear that you were fond of another girl.

JAMES

I was fond of the girl that used to be in the newspaper shop in the town.

ANNE

And used you to talk with her?

JAMES

The elbows were worn out of my coat with leaning on the counter to talk with her. But she married a policeman after that. He was a friend of mine, too. It was me that got him the words and music for "I'll hang my harp on a willow tree" — a song that he was always looking for.

ANNE

Did you make any songs about the girl?

JAMES

I did not.

ANNE

Oh, James, I'm glad of that. I'm glad you made no songs about her.

JAMES

Are you content to marry me in the town of Ardagh, after the Feis, as Maire wishes?

ANNE

It will be strange to be married in Ardagh, away from the people I know.

JAMES

It will be lucky getting married after the Feis.

ANNE

James, it's a great trial for a girl to face marriage; but, James, I'm very fond of you.

[*James kisses her.*

JAMES

I don't know what to think of them writers who say that the Irish girls haven't the heart for love.

ANNE

Is Maire outside?

JAMES

She went out.

ANNE

It's a wonder that Brian MacConnell isn't here before this.

[*Anne rises. Maire comes in.*

ANNE

Is there no one coming here?

MAIRE

There is no one on the road.

ANNE

Brian MacConnell is late in coming.

[*Maire comes up to the fire. Anne stands with her. James goes to entrance, and remains looking out.*

MAIRE

I saw Brian yesterday.

ANNE

And did you tell him that you were going at the sunset?

MAIRE

I told him we were going in the evening.

ANNE

Maybe you were distant with Brian?

MAIRE

He looked like a man that something had happened to. Connor Gilpatrick came up, and then I went away.

[*Conn Hourican comes out of room. He has left the greatcoat in room. He brings the fiddle with him. Maire and Anne go to the settle. They talk.*

JAMES (*to Conn*)

What would you think of a row of trees planted before the door?

[*Conn leaves fiddle on dresser, and comes to him.*

CONN

They might be very becoming, James.

JAMES

My father was saying that the front looked very bare.

CONN

A row of trees, when they'd grow, would make a great difference.

JAMES

That's what my father was saying.

[*They talk, Conn leaning on the half-door.*

ANNE

I'm glad to be here. It would be very strange for me to be married, and in another house.

MAIRE

I was thinking, Anne, that father and myself ought to stay a while on the road, till you and James get settled here.

ANNE

Listen, Maire. James says that he'll be giving this place back to you after a while. With this start he'll be able to get a house and land near his father's place. He has fine schemes for making this place prosperous. James, come here. (*James turns from door*) Come here, James, and talk with Maire.

[*James comes to girls, leaving Conn looking out. Maire rises.*

JAMES

I'll make a path down to the road, and, with a row of trees before the door, the place will be well worth looking at.

MAIRE

We won't know the place after a while.

JAMES

We can never forget, Maire, that it is to you that we owe the place and the start in life.

MAIRE

I never looked on the place as my own.

JAMES

And now that the land is in Anne's name, my father will be glad to stock the place.

MAIRE

You have all our will of the place. Father, speak to James and tell him that he has your will of the place.

CONN (*turning from door*)

Indeed you have, James, and we're overglad to have Anne settled with a steady boy.

JAMES

Well, long life to you, Conn; and may the man of art never want fame nor a friend.

CONN (*going to dresser*)

Drink to that, James.

[*He takes up a bottle and fills two glasses.*

JAMES

I never touch anything, Conn; but if Anne won't think bad of me, I'll drink to your prosperity.

ANNE

I won't be watching you at all. (*She goes to door. To Maire*) I'm going down the road, and if there's any one coming here, I'll let you know.

[*Anne goes out. James takes the glass from Conn.*

JAMES

Here's to the fiddler, first of all. May it be again like in the days of Ireland's glory, when the men of art had their rights and their dues.

[*He drinks.*

CONN

Long life to yourself, James Moynihan. (*Conn drinks*) I know you a long time now, and I know nothing to your discredit. You're one of the few people here that are to my liking. Well, if I'm nothing to them, they're nothing to me. I lived my own life, and I had the gift.

JAMES (*with excitement*)

If Anne was here, I'd drink to her. I must go after Anne. May she never repent of her choice. (*He goes to the door, then turns round*) But sure I'm forget-

ting the jewel of them all, yourself, Maire Hourican. Long may you reign in splendour and success, and in the wish of your heart. [*James Moynihan goes out. Conn Hourican goes back to the door, and remains looking out. Maire stands at fire.*

CONN

It's strange to be looking across that door, and the sun setting for our journey. And now we're letting the place go out of our hands. Well, Honor Gilroy's bit of land has been brought to a great many people.

[*He comes down to dresser. Maire goes up to window, and remains looking out.*

CONN

Is there any one coming here, Maire?

MAIRE

There is no one coming. It's no wonder James's father thought the place was bare-looking.

CONN

Well, the bit of land is going to James, and I was saying that it has been brought to a great many people.

[*Maire takes paper out, and looks at it.*

CONN

What paper is that, Maire?

MAIRE

It's a paper that I have to put my name to. (*She goes and sits at table*) There's a pen and ink near your hand on the dresser, and you might give them to me. It's about giving this place to Anne, and James's father wants my name on the paper.

CONN

Well, isn't James's father the councillor, with his paper and his signing? (*He brings pen and ink from*

dresser, and leaves them on table. Maire makes preparations for writing. Conn lights candle at fire, and brings it over to table) And does that give the place to Anne for ever?

MAIRE

It gives it to herself. (*Maire signs the paper with the slowness of one unaccustomed to writing*) It will be a great change for us when we come back to this place.

CONN (*going to chair at fire*)

It will be a great change for you and me, no matter what we say.

MAIRE

And now that James's father is putting stock on the land, the Moynihans will have great call to the place.

CONN

Maire, your father is thinking of taking to the road.

MAIRE

And how long would you be staying on the roads?

CONN

Ah, what is there to bring me back to this country, Maire?

MAIRE

Sure you're not thinking of going on the roads altogether?

CONN

The road for the fiddler.

MAIRE

Would you leave the shelter and the settled life? Would you go on the road by yourself?

CONN

Anne and yourself will be settled, and I'll have the years before me.

MAIRE

Then you'd go on the roads by yourself?

CONN

Sure I did it before, Maire.

MAIRE

Ah, but do you not remember the prayers that mother used to say for us to get some shelter? Do you not remember how proud and glad we were when we come by a place of our own?

CONN

The shelter was for Anne and yourself. What had I to do with it?

MAIRE

The Moynihans are not the sort to make us feel strangers in the place.

CONN

The place was your own, Maire, and you gave it to your sister rather than see her waiting years and years.

MAIRE

I came to give it to her after I saw how hard I was on yourself.

CONN

Listen, my jewel, even if the Moynihans had nothing to do with the place, what would Conn Hourican the fiddler be doing in this country?

MAIRE

Ah, there are many you might play to; there are lots that know about music. There's Michael Gilpatrick and John Molloy —

CONN

And that's all, Maire.

MAIRE

You might go to Flynn's an odd time.

CONN

And what do they know about music in Flynn's? Young Corney Myles was up there a while ago, and you'd think, from what the men said, that there was never the like of Corney for playing, and the boy isn't three years at the fiddle.

MAIRE

Father, stay here where the shelter is.

CONN

Sure, I'd be getting ould, and staying in the chimney-corner, with no one to talk to me, for you'd be going to a place of your own, and Anne, after a while, would have too much to mind.

MAIRE

The people here are kinder than you think.

CONN

But what has Conn Hourican to do with them anyhow? The very greatest were glad of my playing, and were proud to know me.

MAIRE

I know that, father.

CONN

Well, one is always meeting new life upon the roads, and I want to spend the years I have before me going from place to place.

MAIRE (*going to him*)

If you took to the roads, I'd think I ought to go with you, for we were always together.

CONN

Ah, Maire, there are some that would keep you here.

MAIRE

Do you know who would keep me here?

CONN

Brian MacConnell is very fond of you.

MAIRE

Do you know that, father?

CONN

And I know that you are fond of Brian. (*There is no answer*) That my jewel may have luck and prosperity. (*Goes towards room door, leaving Maire standing there*) I'll be taking this fiddle, Maire.

MAIRE

Oh, are we going on the roads?

CONN

To Ardagh, Maire.

MAIRE

To Ardagh.

CONN

I'll go up now, and make ready.

[*He takes candle off table, and goes back towards room door.*

MAIRE

Oh, what do I know about Brian MacConnell, after all?

CONN

Brian is wild, but he is free-handed.

MAIRE

Wild and free-handed! Are all men like that? Wild and free-handed! But that's not the sort of man I want to look to now.

CONN

That's nothing to Brian's discredit.

MAIRE

Ah, what do I know about Brian MacConnell, except that he's a man of quarrels and broken words?

[*Conn holds up his hand warningly. Brian MacConnell comes to door.*

CONN (*opening half-door*)

You're welcome, Brian.

BRIAN

Thank you for the good word, Conn.

[*He comes in.*

MAIRE

You're welcome, Brian MacConnell.

CONN (*taking candle off dresser*)

I was going up to the room to make ready, but Maire will be glad to speak to you. I knew you wouldn't let us go without wishing us the luck of the road.

[*Goes up to room. Maire goes and sits on settle.*

MAIRE

Brian MacConnell has come to us again.

BRIAN

I'm before you again. Let me tell you what I was doing since I was here last.

MAIRE

What were you doing, Brian? Making quarrels, may be?

BRIAN (*startled*)

Why do you say that?

MAIRE

I'm thinking that you were doing what would become you, Brian MacConnell, with the free hand and the wild heart.

BRIAN

They were telling you about me?

MAIRE

I know you, Brian MacConnell.

BRIAN

You don't know how I care for you, or you couldn't talk to me like that. Many's the time I left the spade in the ground, and went across the bogs and the rushes, to think of you. You come between me and the work I'd be doing. Ay, and if Heaven opened out before me, you would come between me and Heaven itself.

MAIRE

It's easy taking a girl's heart.

BRIAN

And I long to have more than walls and a roof to offer you. I'd have jewels and gold for you. I'd have ships on the sea for you.

MAIRE

It's easy to take a girl's heart with the words of a song.

BRIAN

I'm building a house for you, Maire. I'm raising it day by day.

MAIRE

You left me long by myself.

BRIAN

It's often I came to see the light in the window.

MAIRE

Brian, my father wants to go back to the roads.

[*Brian goes and sits by her.*

BRIAN

I know that Conn would like to go back.

MAIRE

He wants to go on the roads, to go by himself from place to place.

BRIAN

Maybe he has the right to go.

MAIRE

He has the right to go. It's the life of a fiddler to be on the roads.

BRIAN

But you won't go on the roads.

MAIRE

Oh, what am I to do, Brián?

BRIAN

Do you think of me at all, Maire?

MAIRE

Indeed I think of you. Until to-day I'd neither laugh nor cry but on account of you.

BRIAN

I'm building a house, and it will be white and fine, and it's for you that I'm building the house.

MAIRE

You're going to ask for my promise.

BRIAN

Give me your promise before you go to Ardagh.

[*Maire rises.*

MAIRE

If I gave you my promise now, I'd have great delight in coming back to this place again.

BRIAN

You won't deny me, my jewel of love?

MAIRE

Oh, I'm very fond of Aughnalee. I feel that I was reared in the place. I'd like to live all my life in the place.

BRIAN

And why would you go from it?

MAIRE

You might come with us to Ardagh, Brian.

BRIAN

Your father might stay with us when he'd be in this country.

MAIRE

That's true; I'm glad to think on that.

BRIAN

Give me your promise, Maire.

MAIRE

We'll talk on the road. There's the blackbird. I'll hear him every evening on the road, and I'll think I'm a day nearer home.

BRIAN

Sure you'd leave them all to come with me.

MAIRE

Ay, I think I would. (*She takes up a new kerchief, and puts it on her, standing before the mirror*) Do you know where I saw you first, Brian?

BRIAN

Where was it, Maire?

MAIRE

In a field by the road. You were breaking a horse.

BRIAN

I was always a good hand with a horse.

MAIRE

The poor beast was covered with foam and sweat, and at last you made it still. I thought it was grand then.

[*She sings.*

I know where I'm going,
I know who's going with me,

I know who I love,
But the dear knows who I'll marry.

Are your brothers with you, Brian?

BRIAN

Is it building with me?

MAIRE

Building with you?

[*She sings.*

Some say he's dark,
I say he's bonny.
He's the flower of the flock,
My charming, coaxing Johnny.

BRIAN (*with sombre passion*)

No. My brothers are not with me. I quarrelled with them all and I am nearly heart broken for what I did.

MAIRE

Ah, Brian MacConnell, I don't know what to say to you at all.

BRIAN

You'll give me your promise, Maire?

MAIRE

Promise. I've no promise to give to any man.

BRIAN

Remember that these days past I had only yourself to think on.

MAIRE

There was never a man but failed me some time. They all leave me to face the world alone.

BRIAN

You said that I might go with you as far as Ardagh.

MAIRE

No. You're not to come. Myself and my father go to Ardagh by ourselves.

BRIAN

How was I to know that you would take that quarrel to heart?

MAIRE

I thought you were strong, but I see now that you are only a man who forces himself to harsh behaviour. I have my own way to go; my father wants to go back to the roads, and it's right that I should be with him, to watch over him.

BRIAN

What shelter will you have on the road?

MAIRE

I'll have the quiet of evening, and my own thoughts, and I'll follow the music; I'll laugh and hold up my head again.

BRIAN

Maire Hourican, would you leave me?

MAIRE

What can I do for you, Brian MacConnell?

[*Brian goes to settle, and puts his hands before his eyes. She goes to him.*

BRIAN

You have thought for your father, and you have no thought for me.

MAIRE

Indeed I have thought for you.

BRIAN

O Maire, my jewel, do you care for me at all?

[*She kisses him.*

BRIAN

Maire!

[*She rises.*

MAIRE

I'm going to call my father.

BRIAN

You go to him, and you go from me.

MAIRE

You are both my care: my father and yourself.

BRIAN

What will become of me when you go?

MAIRE

Isn't it right, Brian, that I should be with my father on the roads? Even if I was in your house, I would be thinking that I should watch over him.

BRIAN

Then it's good-bye you'd be saying?

MAIRE

Good-bye, Brian MacConnell.

BRIAN (*at door*)

Good-bye, Maire Hourican; gold and jewels, ships on the sea, may you have them all.

[*He goes out. With a cry Maire follows him to the door. She stands before door for a minute, then she goes back to table, and throwing herself down, remains with her head buried in her hands. James Moynihan comes in. Maire raises her head, and remains looking before her. James comes to table, and puts flowers beside Maire.*

JAMES

We gathered them for you, Maire. They're the woodbine. We were saying that you would be glad of the flower of the road. (*Maire puts her hand on the flowers. James goes to the fire*) Anne remembers a good deal about the road. She minds of the grassy

ditches, where the two of you used to catch the young birds.

MAIRE

I mind of them too.

JAMES

And the women that used to be with your mother, that used to tell you the stories.

MAIRE

And the things we used to talk about after a story! There's the turn of the road, and who's waiting for you? If it's your sweetheart, what will you say to him?

JAMES

I'm often taken with the thought of the road! Going to the fair on a bright morning, I'd often wish to leave everything aside and follow the road.

[*A fiddle is heard outside. Conn Hourican comes down, dressed for the road. He has on the greatcoat. He carries fiddle. He puts fiddle on dresser.*

CONN

What music is that, James?

JAMES

Some of the boys are coming to meet you, and they have a fiddle with them.

CONN

Well, now, that's friendly of the boys.

JAMES

I'll go out now, and let them know that you're coming. (*He goes to door*) Brian MacConnell turned the other way, and Anne went after him.

[*He goes out.*

CONN (*anxiously*)

Why did Brian MacConnell go away?

MAIRE

We didn't agree; no, not after all you said.

CONN

Maybe we'll see Brian at Ardagh.

MAIRE

How would he ever come back when I bid him go from me?

CONN

You bid Brian go from you! (*He goes to the window*) And there was myself that had the mind to go on the road that I see stretched out before me.

MAIRE (*going to him*)

You need never come back here.

CONN

I'll come back with yourself.

MAIRE

I remember the time when we were on the roads. I remember sights we used to see! Little towns here, and big towns far away, and always the road.

CONN

And the lasting kindness of the road!

MAIRE

There is no need for you to come back here, father.

CONN

And would you follow the road?

MAIRE

Go back to the fiddler's life, and I'll go back with you. We'll see Anne and James at Ardagh, and we'll be at their marriage. (*She turns round as though to take farewell of the house*) It's right that this place should go to Anne. The house wasn't for you, and it wasn't for me either, I begin to think.

[*Anne comes in.*

ANNE (*with a cry*)

Maire, you are going on the roads!

MAIRE

How do you know that?

ANNE

You bid Brian MacConnell go from you, and where else would you go but on the roads?

[*She goes to the settle and throws herself down, her hands before her face. Maire puts cloak on. Conn goes to Anne. He takes her hands from her face and holds them.*

CONN

Don't be grieving that we're going from you, Anne. When you come back here again, your own care will begin. I know that you grieve for Maire going from you, and my own heart is unquiet for her. (*He goes to dresser, takes fiddle and wraps it up. He puts hat on. Maire goes to settle, and sits beside Anne*) Well, here's Conn Hourican the fiddler going on his travels again. No man knows how his own life will end; but them who have the gift have to follow the gift. I'm leaving this house behind me; and maybe the time will come when I'll be climbing the hills and seeing this little house with the tears in my eyes. I'm leaving the land behind me, too; but what's land after all against the music that comes from the far, strange places, when the night is on the ground, and the bird in the grass is quiet?

[*The fiddle is heard again. Conn Hourican goes to door. Maire embraces Anne again, rises and goes to door. Anne follows slowly. Conn goes out. Maire turns to Anne.*

MAIRE

Tell Brian MacConnell that when we meet again maybe we can be kinder to each other.

[*Maire Hourican goes out with Conn. Anne is left standing at the door in the dusk.*

END OF PLAY

THE FIDDLER'S HOUSE was first produced on 21st March, 1907, by the Theatre of Ireland, in the Rotunda, Dublin, with the following cast: —

CONN HOURICAN.....Joseph Goggin
MAIRE HOURICAN.....Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh
ANNE HOURICAN.....Eileen O'Doherty
BRIAN MACCONNELL..... Ed. Keegan
JAMES MOYNIHAN.....P. Mac Siubhlaigh

THE LAND: AN AGRARIAN COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

CHARACTERS

MURTAGH COSGAR, a farmer
MATT, his son
SALLY, his daughter
MARTIN DOURAS, a farmer
CORNELIUS, his son
ELLEN, his daughter
A group of men
A group of boys and girls

The scene is laid in the Irish Midlands, present time.

ACT I

The interior of Murtagh Cosgar's. It is a large flagged kitchen with the entrance on the right. The dresser is below the entrance. There is a large fireplace in the back, and a room door to the left of the fireplace; the harness-rack is between room door and fireplace. The yard door is on the left. The table is down from the room door. There are benches around fireplace.

It is the afternoon of a May day. Sally Cosgar is kneeling near the entrance chopping up cabbage-leaves with a kitchen-knife. She is a girl of twenty-five, dark, heavily built, with the expression of a half-awakened creature. She is coarsely dressed, and has a sacking apron. She is quick at work, and rapid and impetuous in speech. She is talking to herself.

SALLY

Oh, you may go on grunting, yourself and your litter, it won't put me a bit past my own time. You oul' black baste of a sow, sure I'm slaving to you all the spring. We'll be getting rid of yourself and your litter soon enough, and may the devil get you when we lose you.

[*Cornelius comes to the door. He is a tall young man with a slight stoop. His manners are solemn, and his expression somewhat vacant.*

CORNELIUS

Good morrow, Sally. May you have the good of the day. (*He comes in*)

SALLY (*impetuously*)

Ah, God reward you, Cornelius Douras, for coming in. I'm that busy keeping food to a sow and a litter of pigs that I couldn't get beyond the gate to see any one.

CORNELIUS (*solemnly*)

You're a good girl, Sally. You're not like some I know. There are girls in this parish who never put hands to a thing till evening, when the boys do be coming in. Then they begin to stir themselves the way they'll be thought busy and good about a house.

SALLY (*pleased and beginning to chop again with renewed energy*)

Oh, it's true indeed for you, Cornelius. There are girls that be decking themselves, and sporting are themselves all day.

CORNELIUS

I may say that I come over to your father's, Murtagh Cosgar's house, this morning, thinking to meet the men.

SALLY

What men, Cornelius Douras?

CORNELIUS

Them that are going to meet the landlord's people with an offer for the land. We're not buying ourselves, unfortunately, but this is a great day — the day of the redemption, my father calls it — and I'd like to have some hand in the work if it was only to say a few words to the men.

SALLY

It's a wonder Martin, your father isn't on the one errand with you.

CORNELIUS

We came out together, but the priest stopped father and us on the road. Father Bartley wanted his advice, I suppose. Ah, it's a pity the men won't have some one like my father with them! He was in gaol for the Cause. Besides, he's a well-discoursed man, and a reading man, and, moreover, a man with a classical knowledge of English, Latin, and the Hibernian vernacular.

[*Martin Douras comes in. He is a man of about sixty, with a refined, scholarly look. His manner is subdued and nervous. He has a stoop, and is clean-shaven.*

CORNELIUS

I was just telling Sally here what a great day it is, father.

MARTIN DOURAS

Ay, it's a great day, no matter what our own troubles may be. I should be going home again. (*He takes a newspaper out of his pocket, and leaves it on the table*)

CORNELIUS

Wait for the men, father.

MARTIN DOURAS

Maybe they'll be here soon. Is Murtagh in, Sally?

[*Cornelius takes the paper up, and begins to read it.*

SALLY

He's down at the bottoms, Martin.

MARTIN DOURAS

He's going to Arvach Fair, maybe.

SALLY

He is in troth.

MARTIN DOURAS

I'll be asking him for a lift. He'll be going to the Fair when he come back from the lawyer's, I suppose?

SALLY

Ay, he'll be going to-night.

(*She gathers the chopped cabbage into her apron, and goes to the door*)

SALLY (*at the door*)

Cornelius.

[*Cornelius puts down the paper, and goes to the door. Sally goes out.*

MARTIN DOURAS

Cornelius!

[*Cornelius goes to Martin.*

SALLY (*outside*)

Cornelius, give me a hand with this.

[*Cornelius turns again.*

MARTIN DOURAS

Cornelius, I want to speak to you.

[*Cornelius goes to him.*

MARTIN DOURAS

There is something on my mind, Cornelius.

CORNELIUS

What is it, father?

MARTIN DOURAS

It's about our Ellen. Father Bartley gave me news for her. "I've heard of a school that'll suit Ellen," says he. "It's in the County Leitrim."

CORNELIUS

If it was in Dublin itself, Ellen is qualified to take it on. And won't it be grand to have one of our family teaching in a school?

MARTIN DOURAS (*with a sigh*)

I wouldn't stand in her way, Cornelius; I wouldn't stand in her way. But won't it be a poor thing for an old man like me to have no one to discourse with

in the long evenings? For when I'm talking with you, Cornelius, I feel like a boy who lends back all the marbles he's won, and plays again, just for the sake of the game.

CORNELIUS

We were in dread of Ellen going to America at one time, and then she went in for the school. Now Matt Cosgar may keep her from the school. Maybe we won't have to go further than this house to see Ellen.

MARTIN DOURAS

I'm hoping it'll be like that; but I'm in dread that Murtagh Cosgar will never agree to it. He's a hard man to deal with. Still Murtagh and myself will be on the long road to-night, and we might talk of it. I'm afeard of Ellen going.

CORNELIUS (*at the door*)

It's herself that's coming here, father.

MARTIN DOURAS

Maybe she has heard the news and is coming to tell us.

[*Ellen comes in. She has a shawl over her head which she lays aside. She is about twenty-five, slightly built, nervous, emotional.*

ELLEN

Is it only ourselves that's here?

MARTIN DOURAS

Only ourselves. Did you get any news to bring you over, Ellen?

ELLEN

No news. It was the shine of the day that brought me out; and I was thinking, too, of the girls that are going to America in the morning, and that made me restless.

[*Martin and Cornelius look significantly at each other.*

MARTIN DOURAS

And did you see Matt, Ellen?

ELLEN

He was in the field and I coming up; but I did not wait for him, as I don't want people to see us together. (*Restlessly*) I don't know how I can come into this house, for it's always like Murtagh Cosgar. There's nothing of Matt in it at all. If Matt would come away. There are little labourers' houses by the side of the road. Many's the farmer's son became a labourer for the sake of a woman he cared for!

CORNELIUS

And are you not thinking about the school at all, Ellen?

ELLEN

I'll hear about it some time, I suppose.

MARTIN DOURAS

You're right to take it that way, Ellen. School doesn't mean scholarship now. Many's the time I'm telling Cornelius that a man farming the land, with a few books on his shelf and a few books in his head, has more of the scholar's life about him than the young fellows who do be teaching in schools and teaching in colleges.

CORNELIUS

That's all very well, father. School and scholarship isn't the one. But think of the word "Constantinople!" I could leave off herding and digging every time I think on that word!

MARTIN DOURAS

Ah, it's a great word. A word like that would make you think for days. And there are many words like that.

ELLEN

It's not so much the long words that we've to learn and teach now. When will you be home, father? Will Cornelius be with you?

MARTIN DOURAS

Ellen, I have news for you. There is a school in Leitrim that Father Bartley can let you have.

ELLEN

In Leitrim! Did you tell Matt about it?

MARTIN DOURAS

I did not.

[*Sally is heard calling "Cornelius." Cornelius goes to the door.*

CORNELIUS

Here's Matt now. The benefit of the day to you, Matt.

[*He stands aside to let Matt enter. Matt Cosgar is a young peasant of about twenty-eight. He is handsome and well-built. He is dressed in a trousers, shirt, and coat, and has a felt hat on. Cornelius goes out.*

MATT (*going to Ellen*)

You're welcome, Ellen. Good morrow, Martin. It's a great day for the purchase, Martin.

MARTIN DOURAS

A great day, indeed, thank God.

MATT

Ah, it's a great thing to feel the ownership of the land, Martin.

MARTIN DOURAS

I don't doubt but it is.

MATT

Look at the young apple-trees, Ellen. Walking up this morning, I felt as glad of them as a young man would be glad of the sweetheart he saw coming towards him.

ELLEN

Ay, there's great gladness and shine in the day.

MATT

It seems to trouble you.

ELLEN

It does trouble me.

MATT

Why?

ELLEN

Everything seems to be saying, "There's something here, there's something going."

MATT

Ay, a day like this often makes you feel that way. It's a great day for the purchase though. How many years ought we to offer, Ellen?

[*Martin goes out.*

ELLEN

Twenty years, I suppose — (*suddenly*) Matt!

MATT

What is it, Ellen?

ELLEN

I have got an offer of a school in the County Leitrim.

MATT

I wish they'd wait, Ellen. I wish they'd wait till I had something to offer you.

ELLEN

I'm a long time waiting here, Matt.

MATT

Sure we're both young.

ELLEN

This is summer now. There will be autumn in a month or two. The year will have gone by without bringing me anything.

MATT

He'll be letting me have my own way soon, my father will.

ELLEN

Murtagh Cosgar never let a child of his have their own way.

MATT

When the land's bought out, he'll be easier to deal with.

ELLEN

When he owns the land, he'll never let a son of his marry a girl without land or fortune.

MATT

Ellen, Ellen, I'd lose house and land for you. Sure you know that, Ellen. My brothers and sisters took their freedom. They went from this house and away to the ends of the world. Maybe I don't differ from them so much. But I've put my work into the land, and I'm beginning to know the land. I won't lose it, Ellen. Neither will I lose you.

ELLEN

O Matt, what's the land after all? Do you ever think of America? The streets, the shops, the throngs?

MATT

The land is better than that when you come to know it, Ellen.

ELLEN

May be it is.

MATT

I've set my heart on a new house. Ay and he'll build one for us when he knows my mind.

ELLEN

Do you think he'd build a new house for us, Matt?

I could settle down if we were by ourselves. Maybe it's true that there are things stirring and we could begin a new life, even here.

MATT

We can, Ellen, we can. Hush! father's without.

[*Martin Douras and Murtagh Cosgar are heard exchanging greetings. Then Murtagh comes in, Martin behind him. Murtagh Cosgar is about sixty. He is a hard, strong man, seldom-spoken, but with a flow of words and some satirical power. He is still powerful, mentally and physically. He is clean shaven, and wears a sleeved waistcoat, heavy boots, felt hat. He goes towards Ellen.*

MURTAGH

Good morrow to you. (*Turning to Matt*) When I get speaking to that Sally again, she'll remember what I say. Giving cabbage to the pigs, and all the bad potatoes in the house. And I had to get up in the clouds of the night to turn the cows out of the young meadow. No thought, no care about me. Let you take the harness outside and put a thong where there's a strain in it.

[*Murtagh goes to the fire. Matt goes to the harness-rack. Martin Douras and Ellen are at the door.*

MARTIN DOURAS

Ellen, I'll have news for you when I see you again. I've made up my mind to that.

ELLEN

Are you going to the fair, father?

MARTIN DOURAS

Ay, with Murtagh.

ELLEN

God be with you, father. (*She goes out*)

MARTIN DOURAS

What purchase are you thinking of offering, Murtagh?

MURTAGH COSGAR

Twenty years.

MARTIN DOURAS

It's fair enough. Oh, it's a great day for the country, no matter what our own troubles may be.

[*Matt has taken down the harness. He takes some of it up and goes out to yard.*

MURTAGH COSGAR (*with some contempt*)

It's a pity you haven't a share in the day after all.

MARTIN DOURAS

Ay, it's a pity indeed.

[*Murtagh goes to the door.*

MURTAGH COSGAR (*with suppressed enthusiasm*)

From this day out we're planted in the soil.

MARTIN DOURAS

Ay, we're planted in the soil.

MURTAGH COSGAR

God, it's a great day.

[*Cornelius comes back.*

CORNELIUS

This is a memorial occasion, Murtagh Cosgar, and I wish you the felicitations of it. I met the delegates and I coming in, and I put myself at the head of them. It's the day of the redemption, Murtagh Cosgar.

[*Murtagh, without speaking, goes up to the room left.*

CORNELIUS

He's gone up to get the papers. Father, we must give the men understanding for this business. They must demand the mineral rights. Here they are. Men of Ballykillduff, I greet your entrance.

[*Six men enter discussing.*

FIRST MAN

We'll leave it to Murtagh Cosgar. Murtagh Cosgar isn't a grazier or a shopkeeper.

SECOND MAN

It's the graziers and shopkeepers that are putting a business head on this.

THIRD MAN

If we're all on the one offer, we can settle it at the lawyer's.

FOURTH MAN

Sure it's settled for twenty years on the first-term rents.

FIFTH MAN

There are some here that would let it go as high as twenty-three.

SIXTH MAN

What does Murtagh Cosgar say?

SOME OF THE MEN

We'll take the word from him.

MARTIN DOURAS

He mentioned twenty years.

SECOND MAN

Not as a limit, surely?

OTHER MEN

We're not for any higher offer.

SECOND MAN

Well, men, this is all I have to say. If you can get it for twenty, take it, and my blessing with it. But I want to be dealing with the Government, and not with landlords and agents. To have a straight bargain between myself and the Government, I'd put it up to twenty-three, ay, up to twenty-five years' purchase.

THIRD MAN

More power to you, Councillor. There's some sense in that.

SIXTH MAN

I'm with the Councillor.

FIRST MAN

It's all very well for graziers and shopkeepers to talk, but what about the small farmer?

FOURTH MAN

The small farmer. That's the man that goes under.

FIFTH MAN (*knocking at the table*)

Murtagh Cosgar! Murtagh Cosgar!

CORNELIUS

I tell you, men, that Murtagh Cosgar is in agreement with myself. Twenty years, I say, first term, no more. Let my father speak.

MARTIN DOURAS

There's a great deal to be said on both sides, men.

FIRST MAN

Here's Murtagh now.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Twenty years first term, that's what I agreed to.

SECOND MAN

And if they don't rise to that, Murtagh?

MURTAGH COSGAR

Let them wait. We can wait. I won't be going with you, men. I had a few words with the agent about the turbary this morning, and maybe you're better without me.

FIRST MAN

All right, Murtagh. We can wait.

FOURTH MAN

We know our own power now.

FIFTH MAN

Come on, men.

MURTAGH COSGAR

If they don't rise to it, bide a while. We can make a new offer.

SECOND MAN

We want to be settled by the Fall.

THIRD MAN

The Councillor is right. We must be settled by the Fall.

SIXTH MAN

A man who's a farmer only has little sense for a business like this.

SECOND MAN

We'll make the offer, Murtagh Cosgar, and bide a while. But we must be settled this side of the Fall. We'll offer twenty years first term.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Do, and God speed you.

CORNELIUS (*to the men going out*)

I told you Murtagh Cosgar and myself are on the one offer. And Murtagh is right again when he says that you can bide your time. But make sure of the mineral rights, men; make sure of the mineral rights.

[*The men go out; Cornelius follows them.*

MURTAGH COSGAR (*with irony*)

Musha, but that's a well-discoursed lad. It must be great to hear the two of you at it.

MARTIN DOURAS

God be good to Cornelius. There's little of the world's harm in the boy.

MURTAGH COSGAR

He and my Sally would make a great match of it. She's a bright one, too.

MARTIN DOURAS

Murtagh Cosgar, have you no feeling for your own flesh and blood?

MURTAGH COSGAR

Too much feeling, maybe. (*He stands at the door in silence. With sudden enthusiasm*) Ah, but that's the sight to fill one's heart. Lands ploughed and spread. And all our own; all our own.

MARTIN DOURAS

All our own, ay. But we made a hard fight for them.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ay.

MARTIN DOURAS

Them that come after us will never see them as we're seeing them now.

MURTAGH COSGAR (*turning round*)

Them that come after us. Isn't that a great thought, Martin Douras? and isn't it a great thing that we're able to pass this land on to them, and it redeemed for ever? Ay, and their manhood spared the shame that our manhood knew. Standing in the rain with our hats off to let a landlord — ay, or a landlord's dog-boy — pass the way!

MARTIN DOURAS (*mournfully*)

May it be our own generation that will be in it. Ay, but the young are going fast; the young are going fast.

MURTAGH COSGAR (*sternly*)

Some of them are no loss.

MARTIN DOURAS

Ten of your own children went, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR

I never think of them. When they went from my control, they went from me altogether. There's the more for Matt.

MURTIN DOURAS (*moistening his mouth, and beginning very nervously*) Ay, Matt. Matt's a good lad.

MURTAGH COSGAR

There's little fear of him leaving now.

MARTIN DOURAS (*nervously*)

Maybe, maybe. But, mind you, Murtagh Cosgar, there are things — little things, mind you. Least, ways, what we call little things. And, after all, who are we to judge whether a thing —

MURTAGH COSGAR

Is there anything on your mind, Martin Douras?

MARTIN DOURAS (*hurriedly*)

No; oh, no. I was thinking — I was thinking, maybe you'd give me a lift towards Arvach, if you'd be going that way this night.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ay, why not?

MARTIN DOURAS

And we could talk about the land, and about Matt, too. Wouldn't it be a heart-break if any of our children went — because of a thing we might —

MURTAGH COSGAR (*fiercely*)

What have you to say about Matt?

MARTIN DOURAS (*stammering*)

Nothing except in a — in what you might call a general way. There's many a young man left house and land for the sake of some woman, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR

There's many a fool did it.

MARTIN DOURAS (*going to door*)

Ay, maybe; maybe. I'll be going now, Murtagh.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Stop! (*clutching him*) You know about Matt. What woman is he thinking of?

MARTIN DOURAS (*frightened*)

We'll talk about it again, Murtagh. I said I'd be back.

MURTAGH COSGAR

We'll talk about it now. Who is she? What name has she?

MARTIN DOURAS (*breaking from him and speaking with sudden dignity*)

It's a good name, Murtagh Cosgar; it's my own name.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Your daughter! Ellen! You're —

MARTIN DOURAS

Ay, a good name, and a good girl.

MURTAGH COSGAR

And do you think a son of mine would marry a daughter of yours?

MARTIN DOURAS

What great difference is between us, after all?

MURTAGH COSGAR (*fiercely*)

The daughter of a man who'd be sitting over his fire reading his paper, and the clouds above his potatoes, and the cows trampling his oats. (*Martin is beaten down*) Do you know me at all, Martin Douras? I came out of a little house by the roadway and built my house on a hill. I had many children. Coming home in the long evenings, or kneeling still when the prayers would be over, I'd have my dreams. A son

in Aughnalee, a son in Ballybrian, a son in Dunmore, a son of mine with a shop, a son of mine saying Mass in Killnalee. And I have a living name — a name in flesh and blood.

MARTIN DOURAS

God help you, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR

But I've a son still. It's not your daughter he'll be marrying. (*He strides to the door and calls Matt*)

MARTIN DOURAS (*going to him*)

Murtagh Cosgar — for God's sake — we're both old men, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR

You've read many stories, Martin Douras, and you know many endings. You'll see an ending now, and it will be a strong ending, and a sudden ending.

[*Matt comes in.*

MURTAGH COSGAR

You're wanted here.

MATT

I heard you call. (*He sits on table*) So they're sticking to the twenty years.

MARTIN DOURAS (*eagerly*)

Twenty years, Matt, and they'll get it for twenty. O, it's a great day for you both! Father and son, you come into a single inheritance. What the father wins the son wields.

MURTAGH COSGAR

What the father wins, the son wastes.

MATT

What's the talk of father and son?

MARTIN DOURAS

They're the one flesh and blood. There's no more

strife between them than between the right hand and the left hand.

MURTAGH COSGAR (*to Matt*)

We were talking about you. We were fixing a match for you.

MATT (*startled, looking at Martin Douras*)

Fixing a match for me? (*He rises*)

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ay, Matt. Don't you think it's time to be making a match for you?

MATT (*sullenly, going to the door*)

Maybe it is. When you have chosen the woman, call. I'll be without.

MURTAGH COSGAR (*going to him*)

We haven't chosen yet. But it won't be Martin Douras' daughter, anyhow.

MATT

Stop. You drove all your living children away, except Sally and myself. You think Sally and myself are the one sort.

MURTAGH COSGAR (*tauntingly*)

Martin's daughter, Corney's sister. That's the girl for you!

MATT

We're not the one sort, I tell you. Martin Douras, isn't he a foolish old man that would drive all his children from him? What would his twenty years' purchase be to him then?

MURTAGH COSGAR

It wasn't for my children I worked. No, no; thank God; it wasn't for my children I worked. Go, if you will. I can be alone.

MARTIN DOURAS

O Murtagh, Murtagh, sure you know you can't be alone. We're two old men, Murtagh.

MURTAGH COSGAR

He daren't go.

MATT

Because I'm the last of them he thinks he can dare me like that.

MURTAGH COSGAR

There was more of my blood in the others.

MATT

Do you say that?

MARTIN DOURAS

Don't say it again. For God's sake, don't say it again, Murtagh.

MURTAGH COSGAR

I do say it again. Them who dared to go had more of my blood in them!

MATT

Ah, you have put me to it now, and I'm glad, glad. A little house, a bit of land. Do you think they could keep me here?

MURTAGH COSGAR (*to Martin Douras*)

It's his own way he wants. I never had my own way. (*To Matt*) You're my last son. You're too young to know the hardship there was in rearing you.

MATT (*exultantly*)

Your last son; that won't keep me here. I'm the last of my name, but that won't keep me here. I leave you your lands, your twenty years' purchase. Murtagh Cosgar, Murtagh Cosgar! isn't that a great name, Martin Douras — a name that's well planted,

a name for generations? Isn't he a lucky man that has a name for generations? (*He goes out*)

MURTAGH COSGAR

He can't go. How could he go and he the last of the name. Close the door, I say.

MARTIN DOURAS

He'll go to Ellen, surely. We'll lose both of them. Murtagh Cosgar, God comfort you and me.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ellen; who's Ellen? Ay, that daughter of yours. Close the door, I say.

[*He sits down at fireplace. Martin Douras closes door and goes to him.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

Interior of Martin Douras'. The entrance is at back left. There is a dresser against wall back; a table down from dresser; room doors right and left. The fireplace is below the room door right; there are stools and chairs about it. There is a little bookcase left of the dresser, and a mirror beside it. There are patriotic and religious pictures on the wall. There are cups and saucers on table, and a teapot beside fire. It is afternoon still. Ellen Douras is near the fire reading. Cornelius comes in slowly.

CORNELIUS

I left the men down the road a bit. We ought to take great pride out of this day, Ellen. Father did more than any of them to bring it about.

ELLEN

He suffered more than any of them. And it's little we'll get out of the day.

CORNELIUS

It's a great thing to have prophesied it, even. We'll be here to see a great change.

ELLEN

There will be no change to make things better!

CORNELIUS

Will you be taking that school, Ellen?

ELLEN

I'll wait a while.

[*Sally coming in; she is hurried.*

SALLY (*breathlessly*)

Oh, God save you, Cornelius. Tell me, is my father gone? I dread going back and he there! It was all over that baste of a sow that has kept me slaving all through the spring till I don't know whether greens or potatoes is the fittest for her!

CORNELIUS

He didn't go, Sally. I went down a bit of the road myself with the men.

SALLY

Oh, God help me! And I'll have to be going back to boil meal for her now. How are you, Ellen. (*She goes to Ellen*)

ELLEN

Sit down for a while, Sally; it's a long time since I was speaking to you.

[*Sally sits down beside Ellen.*

CORNELIUS

I'll leave this paper where they won't be looking for pipe-lights. There are things in that paper I'd like to be saying. (*He takes a newspaper out of his pocket and goes to room right*)

ELLEN (*to Sally, who has been watching Cornelius*)

Tell me, Sally, are they always that busy in your house? Is your father as harsh as they say?

SALLY

Father 'ud keep us all working. He's a powerful great man.

ELLEN

Matt will be bringing a wife into the house soon from all I hear. How would your father treat her?

SALLY

Oh, he'd have his way, and she'd have her way, I suppose.

ELLEN

And do you think your father will let him marry?

SALLY

Sure he must if the boy likes.

ELLEN

What would he say if Matt married a girl without a fortune?

SALLY

In my mother's country there are lots of girls with fortunes that Matt could have.

ELLEN

Supposing he wanted a girl that had no fortune?

SALLY

Oh, I suppose father would give in in the end. It wouldn't be clay against flint when Matt and father would be to it.

ELLEN

You're a good girl, Sally. If I was Matt's wife, do you think you'd be fond of me?

SALLY

I'd like you as well as another, Ellen.

[*Cornelius comes down from room.*

CORNELIUS

I suppose they'll be here soon.

ELLEN

I have tea ready for them.

SALLY

Who's coming at all?

CORNELIUS

Some of the boys and girls that are for America.

They are going to Gilroy's to-night, and are leaving from that in the morning. They are coming in to see Ellen on their way down.

SALLY

There are a good many going this flight. The land never troubles them in America, and they can wear fine clothes, and be as free as the larks over the bogs. It's a wonder you never thought of going, Ellen.

ELLEN

Father wouldn't like me to be far from him, and so I went in for the school instead.

SALLY

And now you've got a fine boy like Matt. It was lucky for you to be staying here.

ELLEN

Hush, Sally.

SALLY

Oh, I knew all about it before you talked to me at all. Matt always goes to the place where he thinks you'd be.

ELLEN (*rising*)

I'll be in the room when the girls come, Cornelius.

[*She goes into room left.*

SALLY (*going to Cornelius*)

God help us, but she's the silent creature. Isn't it a wonder she's not filled with talk of him after seeing him to-day? But Ellen's right. We shouldn't be talking about men, nor thinking about them either; and that's the way to keep them on our hands on the long run. I'll be going myself.

[*She goes towards door.*

CORNELIUS (*going to her*)

Don't be minding Ellen at all, Sally.

SALLY

Well, as high as she is, and as mighty as she is, she came into his own house to see Matt. God between us and harm, Cornelius, maybe they'll be saying I came into your house to see you.

CORNELIUS

Who'll know you came at all? And what isn't seen won't be spoken of.

SALLY

Would you like me to stay, Cornelius?

CORNELIUS

Ay, I would.

SALLY

Divil mind the sow.

[*They sit down together.*

SALLY (*after a pause*)

Would you like me to knit you a pair of socks, Cornelius?

CORNELIUS

Oh, I would, Sally; I'd love to wear them.

SALLY

I'll knit them. We'll be getting rid of the sow tonight, maybe, and I'll have time after that.

CORNELIUS

And you come along the road when I'm herding. I don't want to be going near your father's house.

SALLY

O Cornelius, it won't be lucky for us when father hears about Ellen and Matt.

CORNELIUS

That's true. No man sees his house afire but looks to his rick.

SALLY

Come down a bit of the road with me, Cornelius. The sow will be grunting and grunting, reminding father that I'm away. Och, a minute ago I was as contented as if there was no land or pigs, or harsh words to trouble one. (*She goes to the door*) The boys and girls for America are coming here.

CORNELIUS

Give me your hands to hold, Sally. (*She gives him her hands*) We are as young as any of them after all.

[*They hold each other's hands, then stand apart.*

SALLY

It's a fine time for them to be going when the leaves are opening on the trees.

[*Three boys and three girls enter. They are dressed for going away.*

SALLY

God save you, girls. Good-bye, Cornelius. I'll have to run like a redshank.

[*Sally goes out.*

CORNELIUS

I'll call Ellen down to you. (*He goes to the room door and calls*) I'm going herding myself. Herding is pleasant when you have thoughts with you.

[*He takes up the rod and goes out. The girls begin whispering, then chattering.*

FIRST GIRL

Sure I know. Every night I'm dreaming of the sea and the great towns. Streets and streets of houses and every street as crowded as the road outside the chapel when the people do be coming from Mass.

FIRST BOY

I could watch the crowd in the street; I would think it better than any sight I ever knew.

SECOND GIRL

And the shops and the great houses.

SECOND BOY

There's no stir here. There's no fine clothes, nor fine manners, nor fine things to be seen.

THIRD BOY

There's no money. One could never get a shilling together here. In America there's money to have and to spend and to send home.

THIRD GIRL

Every girl gets married in America.

[*Ellen comes down.*

ELLEN

I'm glad you came. I have tea ready for you. I can't go to Gilroy's to-night.

[*Some come to the table and some remain near the door.*

A GIRL (*at table, to Ellen*)

They say that a peat fire like that will seem very strange to us after America. Bridget wondered at it when she came back. "Do civilized people really cook at the like of them?" said she.

A BOY

It's the little houses with only three rooms in them that will seem strange. I'm beginning to wonder myself at their thatch and their mud walls.

ANOTHER GIRL

Houses in bogs and fields. It was a heart-break trying to keep them as we'd like to keep them.

A GIRL (*at door*)

Ah, but I'll never forget Gortan and the little road to Aughnalee.

ANOTHER GIRL

I think I'll be lonesome for a long time. I'll be thinking on my brothers and sisters. I nursed and minded all the little ones.

FIRST BOY

A girl like you, Ellen, is foolish to be staying here.

SECOND BOY

She'll be coming in the fall. We'll be glad to see you, Ellen.

ELLEN

I have no friends in America.

FIRST GIRL

I have no friends there, either. But I'll get on. You could get on better than any of us, Ellen.

SECOND GIRL

She's waiting for her school. It will be a little place by the side of a bog.

THIRD GIRL (*going to Ellen*)

There would be little change in that. And isn't it a life altogether different from this life that we have been longing for? To be doing other work, and to be meeting strange people. And instead of bare roads and market-towns, to be seeing streets, and crowds, and theaters.

ELLEN (*passionately*)

O what do you know about streets and theaters? You have only heard of them. They are finer than anything you could say. They are finer than anything you could think of, after a story, when you'd be young.

A GIRL

You'll be going after all, Ellen.

ELLEN

I won't be going.

FIRST GIRL

Well, maybe you'll be down at Gilroy's. We must go now.

[*The girls go to the door. Ellen goes with them.*

ONE OF THE BOYS

Phil said that an egg was all he could touch while he was on the sea.

SECOND BOY

God help us, if that was all Phil could take.

THIRD BOY

Light your pipes now, and we'll go.

[*Ellen has parted with the girls. The boys light their pipes at fire. They go to door, and shake hands with Ellen. The boys go out.*

ELLEN

Theaters! What do they know of theaters? And it's their like will be enjoying them.

[*Sally comes back. She is more hurried than before.*

SALLY

Ellen! Ellen! I have wonders to tell. Where is Cornelius, at all? He's never here when you have wonders to tell.

ELLEN

What have you to tell?

SALLY

Oh, I don't know how I'll get it all out! Matt and father had an *odious* falling out, and it was about you. And Matt's going to America; and he's to

bring you with him. And Cornelius was saying that if father found out about yourself and Matt —

ELLEN

Sally, Sally, take breath and tell it.

SALLY

Matt is going to America, like the others, and he's taking you with him.

ELLEN

Sally, Sally, is it the truth you're telling?

SALLY

It is the truth. Honest as day, it is the truth.

ELLEN

And I thought I'd be content with a new house. Now we can go away together. I can see what I longed to see. I have a chance of knowing what is in me. (*She takes Sally's hands*) It's great news you've brought me. No one ever brought me such news before. Take this little cross. You won't have a chance of getting fond of me after all. (*She wears a cross at her throat; she breaks the string, and gives it to Sally*)

SALLY

I don't know why I was so fervent to tell you. There's the stool before me that myself and Cornelius were sitting on, and he saying — (*She goes to the door*) Here's Matt! Now we'll hear all about it.

ELLEN

So soon; so soon. (*She goes to the mirror. After a pause, turning to Sally*) Go down the road a bit, when he comes in. Sally, you have a simple mind; you might be saying a prayer that it will be for the best.

SALLY (*going to the door muttering*)

Go down the road a bit! 'Deed and I will not till I know the whole ins and outs of it. Sure I'm as much concerned in it as herself! "No man sees his house afire but watches his rick," he was saying. Ah, there's few of them could think of as fine a thing as that.

[*Matt comes in.*

MATT

Well, Sally, were you home lately?

SALLY

I was — leastways as far as the door. Father and oul' Martin were discoorsing.

MATT

I've given them something to discoorse about. Maybe you'll be treated better from this day, Sally.

SALLY

O Matt, I'm sorry.

[*She goes out.*

MATT (*going to Ellen*)

It happened at last, Ellen; the height of the quarrel came.

ELLEN

It was bound to come. I knew it would come, Matt.

MATT

He was a foolish man to put shame on me after all I did for the land.

ELLEN

You had too much thought for the land.

MATT

I had in troth. The others went when there was less to be done. They could not stand him. Even the girls stole away.

ELLEN

There was the high spirit in the whole of you.

MATT

I showed it to him. "Stop," said I; "no more, or I fling lands and house and everything aside."

ELLEN

You said that.

MATT

Ay. "Your other children went for less," said I; "do you think there's no blood in me at all?"

ELLEN

What happened then?

MATT

"I'm your last son," I said; "keep your land and your twenty years' purchase. I'm with the others; and it's poor your land will leave you, and you without a son to bring down your name. A bit of land, a house," said I; "do you think these will keep me here?"

ELLEN

I knew they could not keep you here, Matt. You have broken from them at last; and now the world is before us. Think of all that is before us — the sea, and the ships, the strange life, and the great cities.

MATT

Ay — there before us — if we like.

ELLEN

Surely we like.

MATT

I was always shy of crowds. I'm simple, after all, Ellen, and have no thought beyond the land.

ELLEN

You said that house and land could not keep you. You told him you were going as your brothers went.

MATT

And I felt I was going. I frightened him. He'll be glad to see me back. It will be long before he treats me that way again.

ELLEN (*suddenly*)

Matt!

MATT

What is it, Ellen?

ELLEN

I don't know — I was upset — thinking of the quarrel (*putting her hands on his shoulders*) My poor Matt. It was about me you quarrelled.

MATT

Ay, he spoke against you. I couldn't put up with that.

ELLEN

He does not know your high spirit. He does not know your strength.

MATT

Ellen, it's no shame for a man to have harsh words said to him when it's about a woman like you.

ELLEN

Let nothing come between us now. I saw you in the winter making drains and ditches, and it wet. It's a poor story, the life of a man on the land.

MATT

I had too much thought for the land.

ELLEN

You had. Have thought for me now. There is no one in fair or market but would notice me. I was

never a favourite. I lived to myself. I did not give my love about. You have never offered me anything. In the song a man offers towns to his sweetheart. You can offer me the sights of great towns, and the fine manners, and the fine life.

MATT

Ellen! (*He draws a little away*) It's not me that could offer the like of that. I never had anything to my hand but a spade.

ELLEN

Your brothers — think of them.

MATT

They all left some one behind them. I am the last of my name.

ELLEN

Why should that keep you back?

MATT

His name is something to a man. Could you hear of your own name melting away without unease? And you are a woman. A man feels it more.

ELLEN

I do not understand men. Will you go back to your father's house after he shaming you out of it?

MATT

He'll be glad to see me back. He'll never cast it up to me that I went.

ELLEN

Matt, your father said words against me. Will you go to him and take his hand after that?

MATT

It was little he said against you. It was against your father he spoke.

ELLEN (*sinking down on a chair, and putting hands before her face*)

My God! After all my waiting, you talk like that.

MATT (*going to her*)

Ellen, Ellen, tell me what I can do for you? There's land and houses to be had here. Father will let me have my own way after this.

ELLEN (*rising, with anger*)

What does it matter to me whether he lets you have your own way or not? Do you think I could go into a farmer's house?

MATT

Ellen!

ELLEN

It's a bad hand I'd make of a farmer's house. I'm not the sort to be in one. I'm not like Sally.

MATT (*getting angry*)

Don't be talking that way, Ellen Douras.

ELLEN (*with great vehemence*)

I must be talking like this. If you take me, you will have to go from your father's house. I always knew it. You ought to know it now, Matt Cosgar.

MATT

You didn't know it always. And you have let some one come between us when you talk like that.

ELLEN

I'm not one to be listening to what people say about you. Nor do I be talking in the markets about you.

MATT

I suppose not. You wouldn't have people think you gave any thought to me; I'm not good enough for you. The people you know are better.

ELLEN

You are foolish to be talking like that. You are foolish, I say.

MATT

I know I am foolish. Fit only to be working in drains and ditches in the winter. That's what you think.

ELLEN

Maybe it is.

MATT

Ellen Douras! Ellen Douras! A farmer's roof will be high enough for you some day.

ELLEN

May I never see the day. Go back, go back. Make it up with your father. Your father will be glad of a labourer.

MATT

Maybe you won't be glad if I go back; thinking on what you've said.

ELLEN

I said too much. We don't know each other at all. Go back. You have made your choice.

[*She goes up to room left.*

MATT

Very well, then. God above, am I to be treated everywhere like a heifer strayed into a patch of oats? Neither man nor woman will make me put up with this any longer. (*Going to door*) When Ellen Douras wants me, she knows the place to send to. (*He stands at door. There is no sound from room. Going back he speaks loudly*) I'll be waiting two days or three days to hear from Ellen Douras.

[*There is no sound. Matt goes out. The room door is thrown open, and Ellen comes down.*

ELLEN (*furiously*)

Two days or three days he'll wait for me. As if I'd go into Murtagh Cosgar's house. As if I'd go into any farmer's house. As if I'd get married at all, and the world before me. Two days or three days you'll wait. Maybe it's lonesome, weary years you'll be waiting, Matt Cosgar.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Interior of Murtagh Cosgar's. It is towards sunset. Murtagh Cosgar is standing before the door looking out. Martin Douras is sitting at the fire in an armchair.

MARTIN DOURAS

It's getting late, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ay, it's getting late.

MARTIN DOURAS

It's time for me to be going home. I should be seeing Ellen. (*He rises*)

MURTAGH COSGAR

Stay where you are. (*Turning round*) We're two old men, as you say. We should keep each other's company for a bit.

MARTIN DOURAS

I should be going home to see Ellen.

MURTAGH COSGAR

If she's going, you can't stay her. Let you keep here.

MARTIN DOURAS

She'll be wondering what happened to me.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Divil a bit it will trouble her. You're going to the fair anyway?

MARTIN DOURAS

I have no heart to be going into a fair.

MURTAGH COSGAR

It's myself used to have the great heart. Driving

in on my own side-car, and looking down on the crowd of them. It's twenty years since I took a sup of drink. Oh, we'll have drinking to-morrow that will soften the oul' skin of you. You'll be singing songs about the Trojans to charm every baste in the fair.

MARTIN DOURAS

We're both old men, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR

And is there any reason in your scholarship why oul' men should be dry men? Answer me that!

MARTIN DOURAS

I won't answer you at all, Murtagh Cosgar. There's no use in talking to you.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Put it down on a piece of paper that oul' men should have light hearts when their care is gone from them. They should be like —

MARTIN DOURAS

There's nothing in the world like men with their rearing gone from them, and they old.

[*Sally comes to the door. She enters stealthily.*

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ha, here's one of the clutch home. Well, did you see that brother of yours?

SALLY

I did. He'll be home soon, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR

What's that you say? Were you talking to him? Did he say he'd be home?

SALLY

I heard him say it, father.

MARTIN DOURAS

God bless you for the news, Sally.

MURTAGH COSGAR

How could he go and he the last of them? Sure it would be against nature. Where did you see him, Sally?

SALLY

At Martin Douras's, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR

It's that Ellen Douras that's putting him up to all this. Don't you be said by her, Sally.

SALLY

No, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR

You're a good girl, and if you haven't wit, you have sense. He'll be home soon, did you say?

SALLY

He was coming home. He went round the long way, I'm thinking. Ellen Douras was vexed with him, father. She isn't going either, Matt says, but I'm thinking that you might as well try to keep a corn-crake in the meadow for a whole winter, as to try to keep Ellen Douras in Aughnalee.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Make the place tidy for him to come into. He'll have no harsh words from me. (*He goes up to the room*)

SALLY

Father's surely getting ould.

MARTIN DOURAS (*sitting down*)

He's gone up to rest himself, God help him. Sally, *a stor*, I'm that fluttered, I dread going into my own house.

SALLY

I'll get ready now, and let you have a good supper before you go to the fair.

MARTIN DOURAS

Sit down near me, and let me hear everything, Sally. Was it Matt that told you, or were you talking to Ellen herself?

SALLY

O, indeed, I had a talk with Ellen, but she won't give much of her mind away. It was Matt that was telling me. "Indeed she's not going," said he, "and a smart young fellow like myself thinking of her. Ellen is too full of notions." Here's Matt himself. Father won't have a word to say to him. He's getting mild as he's getting ould, and maybe it's a fortune he'll be leaving to myself.

[*Matt comes to the door. He enters.*

MATT

Where is he? He's not gone to the fair so early?

SALLY

He's in the room.

MATT

Were you talking to him at all? Were you telling him you saw myself?

SALLY

I was telling him that you were coming back.

MATT

How did he take it?

SALLY

Very quiet. God help us all; I think father's losing his spirit.

MATT (*going to Martin*)

Well, you see I've come back, Martin.

MARTIN DOURAS

Ay, you're a good lad. I always said you were a good lad.

MATT

How did father take it, Martin?

MARTIN DOURAS

Quietly, quietly. You saw Ellen?

MATT

Ay, I saw Ellen (*gloomily*). She shouldn't talk the way she talks, Martin. What she said keeps coming into my mind, and I'm troubled. God knows I've trouble enough on my head.

MARTIN DOURAS (*eagerly*)

What did she say, Matt Cosgar?

MATT

It wasn't what she said. She has that school in her mind, I know.

MARTIN DOURAS

And is there anything to keep her here, Matt Cosgar?

MATT

I don't know that she thinks much of me now. We had a few words, but there's nothing in the world I put above Ellen Douras.

MARTIN DOURAS

I should be going to her.

MATT

Wait a bit, and I'll be going with you. Wait a bit. Let us talk it over. She wouldn't go from you, and you old.

MARTIN DOURAS

God forgive my age, if it would keep her here. Would I have my Ellen drawing turf, or minding a cow, or feeding pigs?

MATT

I'm fond of her, Martin. She couldn't go, and I so fond of her. What am I doing here? I should be

making it up with her. What good will anything be if Ellen Douras goes? (*He turns to the door, then stops*) I came to settle with him. I mustn't be running about like a frightened child.

[*The room door opens, and Murtagh Cosgar is seen. Sally has hung a pot over the fire, and is cleaning the dishes at the dresser.*

MURTAGH COSGAR (*at the room door*)

Sally, it's time to be putting on the meal. If you have any cabbage left, put it through the meal. (*To Matt*) You put the thong in the harness?

MATT

I did (*pause*) Well, I've come back to you.

MURTGAH COSGAR

You're welcome. We were making ready for the fair.

MATT

I'll be going out again before nightfall.

MURTAGH COSGAR

I'll not be wanting you here, or at the fair.

MATT (*sullenly*)

There's no good talking to me like that.

MURTAGH COSGAR

You said, "I've come back," and I said, "you're welcome." You said, "I'm going out again," and I said, "I'll not be wanting you."

MATT

Father, have you no feeling for me at all?

MURTAGH COSGAR

Sure the wild raven on the tree has thought for her young.

MATT

Ay, but do you feel for me, and I standing here, trying to talk to you?

MURTAGH COSGAR

You're my son, and so I feel sorry for you; and you beginning to know your own foolishness. (*He turns to Sally*) I'm not taking the pigs. Put a fresh bedding under them to-night.

SALLY

I will, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Be up early, and let the cows along the road, or they'll be breaking into the young meadow.

SALLY

I'll do that, too.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Be sure to keep enough fresh milk for the young calf.

SALLY

I'll be sure to do it, father.

[*She goes out. Martin takes out his paper, and begins to read it again.*

MATT (*turning on Murtagh*)

Before I go out again there's something I want settled.

MURTAGH COSGAR

What is it you want?

MATT

Would you have me go, or would you have me stay?

MURTAGH COSGAR

Don't be talking of going or staying, and you the last of them.

MATT

But I will be talking of it. You must treat me differently if you want me to stay. You must treat me differently to the way you treat Sally.

MURTAGH COSGAR

You were always treated differently, Matt. In no

house that ever I remember was there a boy treated as well as you are treated here.

MATT

The houses that you remember are different from the houses that are now. Will you have me go, or will you have me stay?

MURTAGH COSGAR

You're very threatening. I'd have you stay. For the sake of the name, I'd have you stay.

MATT

Let us take hands on it, then.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Wait, we'll see what you want first.

MATT

You have no feeling. I'd go out of this house, only I want to give you a chance.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Stop. We can have kindness in this. We needn't be beating each other down, like men at a fair.

MATT

We're not men at a fair. May God keep the kindness in our hearts.

[*Martin rises.*

MURTAGH COSGAR

Don't be going, Martin Douras.

MATT

Don't be going yet. I'll be with you, when you're going.

[*Martin sits down.*

MURTAGH COSGAR (*to Matt*)

You'll be getting married, I suppose, if you stay?

MATT

Maybe I will.

MURTAGH COSGAR (*bitterly*)

In the houses that are now, the young marry where they have a mind to. It's their own business, they say.

MATT

Maybe it is their own business. I'm going to marry Ellen Douras, if she'll have me.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ellen is a good girl, and clever, I'm told. But I would not have you deal before you go into the fair.

MATT

I'm going to marry Ellen Douras.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Her father is here, and we can settle it now. What fortune will you be giving Ellen, Martin? That £100 that was saved while you were in Maryborough gaol?

[*Martin shakes his head.*

MATT (*stubbornly*)

I'm going to marry Ellen Douras, with or without a fortune.

MURTAGH COSGAR (*passionately*)

Boy, your father built this house. He got these lands together. He has a right to see that you and your generations are in the way of keeping them together.

MATT

I'll marry Ellen Douras, with or without a fortune.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Marry her, then. Marry Ellen Douras.

MATT

Now, Martin, we mustn't let an hour pass without going to her. (*He takes Martin's arm, and they go to the door*)

MURTAGH COSGAR

Marry Ellen Douras, I bid you. Break what I have built, scatter what I have put together. That is what all the young will be doing.

[*Ellen Douras comes to the door as Matt and Martin reach it.*

MATT

Ellen!

[*She shrinks back.*

ELLEN

It's my father I came to speak to.

MURTAGH COSGAR (*going to the door, and drawing the bolt from the half-door*)

When you come to my house, Ellen Douras, you are welcome within.

[*Ellen comes in.*

ELLEN

It's right that I should speak to you all. Matt Cosgar, I am going from here.

MATT

Ellen, Ellen, don't be saying that. Don't be thinking of the few words between us. It's all over now. Father agrees to us marrying. Speak, father, and let her hear yourself say it.

ELLEN

I can't go into a farmer's house.

MATT

You said that out of passion. Don't keep your mind on it any longer.

ELLEN

It's true, it's true. I can't go into a farmer's house. This place is strange to me.

MATT

How can you talk like that? I'm always thinking of you.

ELLEN

I've stayed here long enough. I want my own way; I want to know the world.

MATT

If you go, how will I be living, day after day? The heart will be gone out of me.

MURTAGH COSGAR

You'll be owning the land, Matt Cosgar.

MATT (*passionately*)

I've worked on the land all my days. Don't talk to me about it now.

[*Ellen goes to Martin. Murtagh goes up to the door, and then turns and speaks.*

MURTAGH COSGAR

Listen to me, Matt Cosgar; and you listen too, Ellen Douras. It's a new house you want maybe. This house was built for me and my generations; but I'll build a new house for you both. It's hard for a man to part with his land before the hour of his death; and it's hard for a man to break his lands; but I'll break them, and give a share of land to you.

ELLEN

You were never friendly to me; but you have the high spirit, and you deserve a better daughter than I would make. The land and house you offer would be a drag on me. (*She goes to the door*)

MATT

Ellen, what he offers is nothing, after all; but I care for you. Sure you won't go from me like that?

ELLEN

Oh, can't you let me go? I care for you as much as I care for any one. But it's my freedom I want.

MATT

Then you're going surely?

ELLEN

I am. Good-bye.

[*She goes out, Martin follows her. Matt stands dazed. Murtagh closes the door, then goes and takes Matt's arm, and brings him down.*

MURTAGH COSGAR

Be a man. We offered her everything, and she went. There's no knowing what the like of her wants. The men will be in soon, and we'll drink to the new ownership.

MATT

Oh, what's the good in talking about that now? If Ellen was here, we might be talking about it.

MURTAGH COSGAR

To-morrow you and me might go together. Ay, the bog behind the meadow is well drained by this, and we might put the plough over it. There will be a fine, deep soil in it, I'm thinking. Don't look that way, Matt, my son.

MATT

When I meet Ellen Douras again, it's not a farmer's house I'll be offering her, nor life in a country place.

MURTAGH COSGAR

No one could care for you as I care for you. I know the blood between us, and I know the thoughts I had as I saw each of you grow up.

[*Matt moves to the door.*

MURTAGH COSGAR

Where are you going?

MATT

To see the boys that are going away.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Wait till the fall and I'll give you money to go and come back. Farrell Kavanagh often goes to America. You could go with him.

MATT

I'll go by myself, unless Ellen Douras comes now. The creamery owes me money for the carting, and I'll get it.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Then go. Good-bye to you, Matt Cosgar.

MATT

Good-bye to you.

[*He goes out. Murtagh stands, then moves about vaguely*

MURTAGH COSGAR

The floor swept, the hearth tidied. It's a queer end to it all. Twenty years I bid them offer. Twenty years, twenty years!

[*Martin comes back.*

MURTAGH COSGAR

The men will be coming back.

MARTIN DOURAS

I suppose they will.

MURTAGH COSGAR

You're a queer fellow, Martin Douras. You went to gaol for some meeting.

MARTIN DOURAS

Ay.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Them was the stirring times. I can't help but think

of you in gaol, and by yourself. What brings you back now?

MARTIN DOURAS

Ellen told me to go back. I should say something to Matt, I think.

MURTAGH COSGAR

He went out as you came in.

MARTIN DOURAS

I'll go in when the house is quiet. I'll have a few prayers to be saying this night.

MURTAGH COSGAR

I'm going to the fair.

MARTIN DOURAS

I won't be going to the fair.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Why won't you be going to the fair? Didn't you ask me for a lift? You'll be going with me.

MARTIN DOURAS

I won't be going, and don't be overbearing me now, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR

You will be going to the fair, if it was only to be showing that seemly face of yours. (*Going to the door, he calls* "Sally!" *He turns to Martin Douras*) I've a daughter still, Martin Douras.

MARTIN DOURAS

You have, and I have a son.

MURTAGH COSGAR

What would you say to a match between them, Martin Douras?

MARTIN DOURAS

I have nothing to say again it.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Then a match it will be.

[*Sally comes in from yard.*

SALLY

If you fed that baste on honey, she'd turn on you. Cabbage I gave her and got into trouble for it, and now she's gone and trampled the bad potatoes till they're hardly worth the boiling. I'll put the bush in the gap when I'm going out again, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ay. Is that Cornelius Douras that's coming up the path?

SALLY

O faith it is. I'll get him to give me a hand with the trough.

[*Cornelius comes in.*

CORNELIUS

Well, Murtagh Cosgar, a great and memorial day is ended. May you live long to enjoy the fruits of it. Twenty years on the first term, and the land is ours and our children's. I met the men.

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ours and our children's, ay. We've been making a match between yourself and Sally.

CORNELIUS

Between me and Sally?

SALLY

Between Cornelius and myself?

MURTAGH COSGAR

Ay, shake hands on it now.

CORNELIUS

And tell me one thing, Murtagh Cosgar. Is it true that Matt's going to America, and that Ellen will

wait for him for a year at the school? I met them together, and they told me that.

MURTAGH COSGAR

What they say is true, I'm sure. The land is yours and your children's.

SALLY (*wiping her hands in her apron*)

O Cornelius.

CORNELIUS

Aren't they foolish to be going away like that, father, and we at the mouth of the good times? The men will be coming in soon, and you might say a few words. (*Martin shakes his head*) Indeed you might, father; they'll expect it of you. (*Martin shakes his head. Murtagh and Sally try to restrain him*) "Men of Ballykillduff," you might say, "stay on the land, and you'll be saved body and soul; you'll be saved in the man and in the nation. The nation, men of Ballykillduff, do you ever think of it at all? Do you ever think of the Irish nation that is waiting all this time to be born?"

[*He becomes more excited; he is seen to be struggling with words.*

END OF PLAY

THE LAND was first produced at the Abbey Theater, Dublin, in June, 1905, by The Irish National Theater Society, under the direction of W. G. Fay, with the following cast: —

MURTAGH COSGAR	W. G. Fay
MATT	Proinsias MacSiubhlaigh
SALLY	Sara Allgood
MARTIN DOURAS	F. J. Fay
CORNELIUS	Arthur Sinclair
ELLEN	Maire Ni Gharbhaigh

THOMAS MUSKERRY

CHARACTERS

THOMAS MUSKERRY.....The Master of Garrisowen Workhouse
MRS. CRILLY.....His Daughter
CROFTON CRILLY.....His Son-in-law
ALBERT CRILLY.....His Grandson
ANNA CRILLY.....His Granddaughter
JAMES SCOLLARD.....Thomas Muskerry's Successor
FELIX TOURNOUR.....The Porter at Workhouse Lodge
MYLES GORMAN.....A Blind Piper
CHRISTY CLARKE.....A Boy reared in the Workhouse

SHANLEY.....
MICKIE CRIPES..... } Paupers in Workhouse
AN OLD MAN.....

SCENE: *Garrisowen, a town in the Irish Midlands.*

ACT FIRST

The Master's office in Garrisowen Workhouse. It is partly an office, partly a living room. To the right is a door opening on corridor, and in the back, left, a door leading to the Master's apartments. There is an iron stove down from back and towards right, and a big grandfather's clock back towards door of apartments. A basket arm chair down from stove, and a wooden chair beside it. There is a desk against wall, left, and an office stool before it. Down from this desk a table on which is a closed desk. On table are books, papers, and files. On a wooden chair beside the arm chair is a heap of newspapers and periodicals. There is a rack beside corridor door, and on rack a shawl, an old coat, a hat, and a bunch of big keys. In the corner, right, is a little cabinet, and on it a small mirror. Above door of apartments a picture of Daniel O'Connell. The grandfather's clock is ticking audibly. It is 8.45 p.m. The gas over desk is lighted.

Christy Clarke, a youth of about seventeen, is seated in the armchair reading a periodical. His clothes are threadbare, but brushed and clean. He looks studious, and has intellectual possibilities. The clock ticks on, the boy reads, but with little attention. At the corridor door there is a knocking. Christy Clarke turns slightly. The door opens, and a tall man in the ugly dress of a pauper is seen. The man is Felix Tournour. He carries in a bucket of coal. He performs this action like one who has acquired the habit of work under an overseer. He is an ugly figure in his pauper dress. His scanty beard is coal black. He has

a wide mouth and discoloured teeth. His forehead is narrow and bony. He is about forty-five.

TOURNOUR (*in a harsh voice, after looking around*)
Is he not back yet?

CHRISTY (*without stirring*)
Is who not back yet?

TOURNOUR
The master I'm talking about. I don't know where he does be going these evenings.
[*He shovels coal into the stove.*

CHRISTY
And what is it to you where he does be going?

TOURNOUR
Don't talk to me like that, young fellow. You're poorhouse rearing, even though you are a pet. Will he be sitting up here to-night, do you know?

CHRISTY
What's that to you whether he will or not?

TOURNOUR
If he's sitting up late he'll want more coal to his fire.

CHRISTY
Well, the abstracts will have to be finished to-night.

TOURNOUR
Then he will be staying up. He goes out for a walk in the evenings now, and I don't know where he does be going.

CHRISTY
He goes out for a walk in the country. (*Tournour makes a leer of contempt*) Do you never go for a walk in the country, Felix Tournour?

TOURNOUR
They used to take me out for walks when I was a

little fellow, but they never got me out into the country since.

CHRISTY

I suppose, now that you're in the porter's lodge, you watch every one that goes up and down the road?

TOURNOUR

It gratifies me to do so — would you believe that now?

CHRISTY

You know a lot, Felix Tournour.

TOURNOUR

We're told to advance in knowledge, young fellow. How long is Tom Muskerry the Master of Garrisowen Workhouse?

CHRISTY

Thirty years this spring.

TOURNOUR

Twenty-nine years.

CHRISTY

He's here thirty years according to the books.

TOURNOUR

Twenty-nine years.

CHRISTY

Thirty years.

TOURNOUR

Twenty-nine years. I was born in the workhouse, and I mind when the Master came in to it. Whist now, here he is, and time for him.

[*He falls into an officious manner. He closes up the stove and puts bucket away. Then he goes over to desk, and, with his foot on the rung of the office stool, he turns the gas on full. Christy Clarke gets out of armchair, and begins to arrange the periodicals that are on wooden*

chair. The corridor door opens. The man who appears is not the Master, however. He is the blind piper, Myles Gorman, who is dressed in the pauper garb. Myles Gorman is a Gael of the West of Ireland, with a face full of intellectual vigour. He is about sixty, and carries himself with energy. His face is pale and he has a fringe of a white beard. The eye-balls in his head are contracted, but it is evident he has some vestiges of sight. Before the others are aware who he is, he has advanced into the room. He stands there now turning the attentive face of the blind.

GORMAN

Mister Muskerry! Are you there, Mister Muskerry?

TOURNOUR

What do you want, my oul' fellow?

GORMAN (*with a puzzled look*)

Well, now, I've a favour to ask of your honour.

TOURNOUR

Be off out of this to your ward.

GORMAN

Is that Mister Muskerry?

CHRISTY

Mister Muskerry isn't here.

GORMAN

And who am I talking to?

CHRISTY

You are talking to Felix Tournour.

GORMAN

Felix Tournour! Ay, ay. Good night, Felix Tournour. When will the Master be back?

TOURNOUR (*coming to him*)

Not till you're out of this, and back in your ward.

GORMAN

Wasn't there a boy speaking to me?

CHRISTY

Yes (*speaking as if to a deaf man*) The Master will be going the rounds in a while, and you can speak to him in the ward.

GORMAN

I've a favour to ask the Master, and I don't want to ask it before the others. (*To Christy*) Will the Master be here soon, a vick vig? [1]

TOURNOUR (*taking him by the shoulders*)

Here, now, come on, this is your way out.

[*He turns Gorman to the door. As he is putting him out Thomas Muskerry enters*

TOURNOUR

This oul' fellow came into the office, and I was leading him back into his ward.

MUSKERRY

Leave the man alone.

[*Tournour retreats to the stove and takes up the bucket; after a look behind he goes out and closes the corridor door. Christy Clarke takes the periodicals over to table and sits down. Myles Gorman has been eager and attentive. Thomas Muskerry stands with his back to the stove. He is over sixty. He is a large man, fleshy in face and figure, sanguine and benevolent in disposition. He has the looks and movements of one in authority. His hair is white and long; his silver beard is trimmed. His clothes are loosely fitting. He wears no overcoat, but has a white knitted muffler round his neck. He has on a black, broad-brimmed hat, and carries a walking-stick.*

[1] *A mhic bhig*, my little son.

MUSKERRY

Well, my good man?

GORMAN

I'm here to ask a favour from you, Master.

MUSKERRY

You should proffer your request when I'm in the ward. However, I'm ready to give you my attention.

GORMAN

I'm a blinded man, Master, and when you're in the ward I can't get you by yourself conveniently. I can't come up to you like the other oul' men and speak to you private like.

MUSKERRY

Well, now, what can I do for you?

GORMAN (*eagerly*)

They tell me that to-morrow's the market-day, and I thought that you might give me a pass, and let me go out about the town.

MUSKERRY

We'll consider it, Gorman.

GORMAN

Master, let me out in the town on the market-day.

MUSKERRY

We couldn't let you out to play your pipes through the town.

GORMAN

I'm not thinking of the music at all, Master, but to be out in the day and to feel the throng moving about, and to be talking to the men that do be on the roads.

MUSKERRY

We'll consider it, Gorman. (*He takes off muffler, and puts it on back of armchair*)

GORMAN

Well, I'm very much obliged to your honour. Good night to you, Master. (*He passes Muskerry and goes towards the door. Muskerry has been regarding him*)

MUSKERRY

Tell me this, Gorman, were you always on the roads?

GORMAN

I was driving cattle, and I was dealing in horses. Then I took up with an oul' man, and he taught me the pipes. I'm playing the pipes ever since, and that's thirty years ago. Well, the eyes began to wither up on me, and now I've only a stim of sight. I'm a blinded man from this out, Master.

MUSKERRY

And what will you do?

GORMAN

Oh, sure the roads of Ireland are before me when I leave this; I'll be playing my bit of music. (*He moves to the door*)

MUSKERRY

Tell me; have you any family yourself?

GORMAN

Ne'er a chick nor child belonging to me. Ne'er a woman lay by me. I went the road by myself. Will you think of what I asked you, Master?

MUSKERRY

I'll consider it.

GORMAN

Good night to your honour. Remember my name, Master — Gorman, Myles Gorman.

[*Muskerry stands looking after Gorman.*

MUSKERRY

Now, Christy Clarke, I consider that the man gone out is a very exceptional man.

CHRISTY

Is it Myles Gorman?

MUSKERRY

Yes. I'd even say that, considering his station in life, Myles Gorman is a very superior man.

CHRISTY

They say he's not a good musician.

MUSKERRY

And maybe he's not. I consider, however, that there's great intelligence in his face. He stands before you, and you feel that he has the life of a young colt, and then you're bound to think that, in spite of the fact that he's blind and a wanderer, the man has not wasted his life. (*Muskerry settles himself in the armchair*)

CHRISTY

Will you give leave for to-morrow?

MUSKERRY

No, Christy, I will not.

CHRISTY

Why not, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY

That man would break bounds and stay away.

CHRISTY

Do you think he would?

MUSKERRY

He'd fly off, like the woodquest flying away from the tame pigeons.

CHRISTY

He and his brother had a farm between them. His

brother was married, and one day the brother told Myles to go to Dublin to see a comrade of his who was sick. Myles was home in a week, and when he came back he found that his brother had sold the place and was gone out of the country.

MUSKERRY

His brother did wrong, but he didn't do so much wrong to Myles Gorman.

CHRISTY

How is that, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY

He sent Myles Gorman to his own life. He's a man who went his own way always; a man who never had any family nor any affairs; a man far different from me, Christy Clarke. I was always in the middle of affairs. Then, too, I busied myself about other people. It was for the best, I think; but that's finished. On the desk under your hand is a letter, and I want you to bring it to me.

CHRISTY (*going through papers idly*)

"I am much obliged for your favour —"

MUSKERRY

That's not it.

CHRISTY (*reading another letter*)

"I am about to add to the obligations under which I stand to you, by recommending to your notice my grandson, Albert Crilly —"

MUSKERRY

That's the letter. It's the last of its kind. Bring it to me. (*Christy Clarke brings over the letter*) There comes a turn in the blood and a turn in the mind, Christy. This while back I've been going out to the country instead of into the town, and coming back

here in the evenings I've seen the workhouse with the big wall around it, and the big gate going into it, and I've said to myself that Thomas Muskerry ought to be as secure and contented here as if he was in his own castle.

CHRISTY

And so you ought, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

Look round at the office, Christy. I've made it as fit for me as the nest for the wren. I'll spend a few more years here, and then I'll go out on pension. I won't live in the town. I've seen a place in the country I'd like, and the people will be leaving it in a year or two.

CHRISTY

Where is it, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY

I'll say no more about it now, but it's not far from this, and its near the place where I was reared.

CHRISTY

And so you'll go back to your own place?

MUSKERRY

As Oliver Goldsmith my fellow county man, and I might almost say, my fellow parishioner, says — What's this the lines are about the hare, Christy?

CHRISTY

"And like the Hare whom Hounds and Horns pursue
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew."

MUSKERRY

Aye.

"And like the Hare whom Hounds and Horns pursue" — (*The clock strikes nine*)

CHRISTY

You weren't on the rounds yet?

MUSKERRY (*startled*)

Would you believe it, now, it was nearly passing my mind to go on the rounds? (*He rises, putting the letter in his pocket*) Where's that fellow, Albert Crilly? He was to have been in here to give me a hand with the abstracts. Christy Clarke, go down to Miss Coghlan's and get me two novelettes. Bring me up two nice love stories, and be here when I come back.

[*Christy Clarke takes his cap off rack and goes out. Thomas Muskerry puts on his scarf, goes to the rack and takes down the bunch of keys. As he is going out Felix Tournour enters with a bucket of coal. He carries it over to the stove.*

MUSKERRY

Now, Tournour, sweep up this place.

[*Thomas Muskerry goes out by corridor door. Felix Tournour takes brush from under desk, left, and begins to sweep in the direction of corridor door.*

TOURNOUR

Sweeping, sweeping! I'll run out of the house some day on account of the work I've to do for Master Thomas Muskerry. (*He leans on his brush in front of stove*) I know why you're going for walks in the country, my oul' cod. There's them in town that you've got enough of. You don't want to go bail for Madam Daughter, nor for Count Crofton Crilly, your son-in-law, nor for the Masters and Mistresses; all right, my oul' cod-fish. That I may see them laying you out on the flags of Hell. (*He puts the brush standing upright, and speaks to it*)

"The Devil went out for a ramble at night,
Through Garrisowen Union to see every sight.
The oul' men were dreaming of meat to come near them,
And the Devil cocked ears at the words for to hear them.
'Twice a year we get meat,' said the toothless oul' men,
'Oh, Lord send the meat won't be too tough again.'
To clear away dishes Mick Fogarty goes,
May the Devil burn the nails off his toes.
Deep dreaming that night of fast days before,
Sagging the walls with the pull of his snore,
In his chamber above Thomas Muskerry lay snug,
When the Devil this summons roared in his lug —

[*The door of the Master's apartments is opened and Albert Crilly enters. Albert Crilly is a young man, who might be a bank clerk or a medical student. He is something of a dude, but has a certain insight and wit.*

ALBERT (*lighting a cigarette*)

Is the grandparent here, Tournour?

TOURNOUR

He's gone on the rounds, Mister Albert.

ALBERT

What time was he up this morning?

TOURNOUR

He was late enough. He wasn't up in time to come to Mass with us.

ALBERT

The old man will get into trouble.

TOURNOUR

If the nuns hear about it.

ALBERT

He'll have to give the whole thing up soon.

TOURNOUR

He's well off that can get somebody else to do the work for him. (*He continues to sweep towards corridor*)

ALBERT

Tournour, you're a damned clever fellow. I heard a piece of yours yesterday that I thought was damned good.

TOURNOUR

Was it a rhyme?

ALBERT

It was something called "The Devil's Rambles."

TOURNOUR (*taking a step towards him*) Don't let the boss hear, and I'll tell it to you, Mr. Albert. (*He holds the brush in his hands and is about to begin the recitation when Crofton Crilly enters from the Master's apartments. Crofton Crilly has a presentable appearance. He is big and well made, has a fair beard and blue eyes. A pipe is always in his mouth. He is a loiterer, a talker, a listener*)

CRILLY

Are you going to finish the abstracts to-night, Albert?

ALBERT

I believe I am. Go on with "The Devil's Rambles," Tournour.

CRILLY

I heard it in Keegan's. It's damn good.

TOURNOUR

I don't like saying it before Mister Crilly.

CRILLY (*with easy contempt*)

Go on with it, man; I'll leave a pint in Keegan's for you.

TOURNOUR

Well, you mightn't like it.

CRILLY

Have done talking and go on with it.

TOURNOUR (*reciting*) —

"In his chamber above — a – a *person* lay snug,
When the Devil this summons roared in his lug —
'Get up,' said the Devil, 'and swear you'll be true,
And the oath of allegiance I'll tender anew.
You'll have pork, veal, and lamb, mutton-chops, fowl and fish,
Cabbage and carrots and leeks as you wish.
No fast days to you will make visitation,
For your sake the town will have dispensation.
Long days you will have, without envy or strife,
And when you depart you'll find the same life,
And in the next world you'll have your will and your sway,
With a Poorhouse to govern all your own way,
And I'll promise you this; to keep up your state,
You'll have Felix Tournour to watch at the gate.'"

CRILLY

That's damn good. I must get a copy of the whole of it to show at Keegan's.

[*Tournour has swept as far as the corridor door. He opens it and sweeps down the passage. He goes out and closes door.*

CRILLY

That's a damn clever fellow. (*He becomes anxious, as with a troubled recollection. He goes to the little cabinet, opens it, and takes out a bottle of whisky and a glass. He pours some whisky into the glass, and remains looking at himself in the mirror. He smooths his*

beard. He goes to the arm chair with the glass of whisky, the anxious expression still on his face) This is a cursed town. (*He drinks*)

ALBERT

Every town in Ireland is a cursed town.

CRILLY

But this is an extraordinarily cursed town. Everybody's in debt to everybody else. I don't know what's to be done. Now, imagine that fellow, James Covey, failing in business and getting clear out of the town.

ALBERT

Covey seems to have done it well.

CRILLY

God knows how many he has stuck.

ALBERT

Well, he didn't stick the Crillys for anything.

CRILLY

Albert, you don't know how these financial things work out. Do you think would his brother settle?

ALBERT

Settle with whom?

CRILLY

Well . . . with any of the . . . any of the people that have . . . I don't know. It's a cursed town. If I had joined the police at your age, I'd have a pension by this, and I mightn't care for any of them.

ALBERT

I wish I had a job and I'd wait on the pension.

CRILLY

Oh, you'll be all right. The grandfather is seeing about your job.

ALBERT

If the grandparent gets me that job I'll want two new suits at least.

CRILLY

'Pon my soul, Albert, I don't know what's to be done. (*His mind wanders off*) I suppose the abstracts have to go out in the morning.

ALBERT

They have. And damn all the old man has done to them.

CRILLY

The Guardians hear that he's late in the mornings, Albert, and some of them are beginning to question his fitness to check the stores.

ALBERT

The old man ought to resign.

CRILLY

I suppose he ought. I'm not wishing for his resignation myself, Albert. You know your mother regards it as a settled thing that he should come and live with us.

ALBERT

The mother and Anna are preparing for the event.

CRILLY

How's that, Albert?

ALBERT

Mother has James Scollard in her eye for the new Master.

CRILLY

Right enough! Scollard would get it, too, and then he would marry Anna.

ALBERT

That's the arrangement, I expect.

CRILLY

It mightn't be bad. Scollard mightn't want Nancy's money under that arrangement. Still I don't like the idea of the old man living in the house.

ALBERT

The mother would never think of letting him take himself and his pension anywhere else.

CRILLY

I don't think she would.

ALBERT

I wouldn't be surprised if he did go somewhere else. I hear he often goes up to that cottage in Stradrina.

CRILLY

What cottage, Albert?

ALBERT

Briar Cottage. I hear he sits down there, and talks of coming to live in the place.

CRILLY (*warningly*)

Albert, don't clap hands behind the bird. Take my word, and say nothing about it.

ALBERT

All right.

CRILLY

We'd have no comfort in the house if your mother's mind was distracted.

[*Mrs. Crilly enters from corridor. She is a woman of forty, dressed in a tailor-made costume. She has searching eyes. There is something of hysteria about her mouth. She has been good-looking.*

CRILLY

Good night, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

Are you finishing the abstracts, Albert?

ALBERT

I'm working at them. It's a good job we didn't leave the old man much latitude for making mistakes.

MRS. CRILLY (*closing door*)

He'll have to resign.

CRILLY

Good God, Marianne. (*He rises*)

MRS. CRILLY

Well. Let him be sent away without a pension. Of course, he can live with us the rest of his life and give us nothing for keeping him.

CRILLY

I don't know what's in your mind at all, Marianne. (*He crosses over to the cabinet, opens it, and fills out another glass of whisky*)

ALBERT

Let the old man do what suits himself.

CRILLY (*coming back to stove*)

Do, Marianne. Let him do what suits himself. For the present.

MRS. CRILLY

For pity's sake put down that glass and listen to what I have to say.

CRILLY

What's the matter, Marianne?

MRS. CRILLY

James Scollard came to me to-day, and he told me about the things that are noticed. . . . The nuns notice them, the Guardians notice them. He misses Mass. He is late on his rounds. He can't check the stores that are coming into the house. He may get himself into such trouble that he'll be dismissed with only an apology for a pension, or with no pension at all.

CRILLY

I don't know what's to be done.

MRS. CRILLY

If he could be got to resign now James Scollard would have a good chance of becoming Workhouse Master. He would marry Anna, and we would still have some hand in the affairs of the House.

CRILLY

Yes, yes. I think that Scollard could make a place for himself.

ALBERT

The old man won't be anxious to retire.

MRS. CRILLY

Why shouldn't he retire when his time is up?

ALBERT

Well, here he is what's called a potentate. He won't care to come down and live over Crilly's shop.

MRS. CRILLY

And where else would he live in the name of God?

ALBERT

He won't want to live with our crowd.

MRS. CRILLY

What crowd? The boys can be sent to school, you'll be on your situation, and Anna will be away. (*She seats herself in the armchair*) I don't know what Albert means when he says that the Master would not be content to live with us. It was always settled that he would come to us when his service was over. [*Albert, who has been going over the books, has met something that surprises him. He draws Crilly to the desk. The two go over the papers, puzzled and excited. Anna Crilly enters from corridor. She is a handsome girl of about nineteen or twenty, with a rich complexion,*

dark hair and eyes. She is well dressed, and wears a cap of dark fur. She stands at the stove, behind her mother, holding her hands over the stove. Mrs. Crilly watches the pair at the desk.

MRS. CRILLY

We can't think of allowing a pension of fifty pounds a year to go out of our house. Where will we get money to send the boys to school?

ANNA

Mother. Grandfather is going to live away from us.

MRS. CRILLY

Why do you repeat what Albert says?

ANNA

I didn't hear Albert say anything.

MRS. CRILLY

Then, what are you talking about?

ANNA

Grandfather goes to Martin's cottage nearly every evening, and stays there for hours. They'll be leaving the place in a year or two, and Grandfather was saying that he would take the cottage when he retired from the Workhouse.

MRS. CRILLY

When did you hear this?

ANNA

This evening. Delia Martin told me.

MRS. CRILLY

And that's the reason why he has kept away from us. He goes to strangers, and leaves us in black ignorance of his thought.

[*Crilly and Albert are busy at desk.*

CRILLY

Well, damn it all —

ALBERT

Here's the voucher.

CRILLY

God! I don't know what's to be done.

ALBERT

It's a matter of fifty tons.

[*Albert turns round deliberately, leaving his father going through the papers in desperate eagerness. Albert takes a cigarette from behind his ear, takes a match-box from his waistcoat pocket, and strikes a light. He goes towards door of apartments. Mrs. Crilly rises.*

ALBERT (*his hand on the handle of door*)

Well so-long.

MRS. CRILLY

Where are you going?

ALBERT

I'm leaving you to talk it over with the old man.

[*Mrs. Crilly looks from Albert to Crilly.*

CRILLY

The Master has let himself in for something serious, Marianne.

ALBERT

It's a matter of fifty pounds. The old man has let the Guardians pay for a hundred tons of coal when only fifty were delivered.

MRS. CRILLY

Is that so, Crofton?

CRILLY

It looks like it, Marianne.

ALBERT

There were fifty tons of coal already in stores, but the Governor didn't take them into account. That cute boy, James Covey, delivered fifty tons and

charged for the hundred. The old man passed on the certificate, and the Guardians paid Covey. They helped him to his passage to America. (*He opens door and goes through*)

MRS. CRILLY

They will dismiss him — dismiss him without a pension.

ANNA

Mother. If he gets the pension first, could they take it back from him?

CRILLY

No. But they could make him pay back the fifty pounds in instalments.

MRS. CRILLY

Fifty pounds! We can't afford to lose fifty pounds.

ANNA

Who would find out about the coal, father?

CRILLY

The Guardians who take stock.

ANNA

And how would they know at this time whether there was a hundred or a hundred and fifty tons there at first?

CRILLY

The business men amongst them would know. However, there won't be an inspection for some time.

ANNA

Suppose grandfather had got his pension and had left the Workhouse, who would know about the coal?

CRILLY

The new Workhouse Master.

MRS. CRILLY

The new Workhouse Master —

CRILLY
Marianne —

MRS. CRILLY
Well?

CRILLY
I think I'll stay here and advise the old man.

MRS. CRILLY
No. Go away.

CRILLY (*at door of apartments*)
After all, I'm one of the Guardians, and something might be done.

MRS. CRILLY
You can do nothing. We can do nothing for him. Let him go to the strangers.

[*Crilly goes out.*

MRS. CRILLY
Anna!

ANNA
Yes, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
The Martins are not giving up their house for a year or two?

ANNA
No, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
If he resigns now his pension will be safe. There is nothing else against him.

ANNA
But some one will find out the difference in the coal.

MRS. CRILLY
It's the new Workhouse Master who will know that.

ANNA (*hardening*)
But *he* could not pass such a thing, mother.

MRS. CRILLY (*abandoning a position*)

Well, after your grandfather gets his pension we could make some arrangement with the Guardians.

ANNA

Yes, mother. Hasn't grandfather a hundred pounds invested in the shop?

MRS. CRILLY

It's not a hundred pounds. Besides, it's not an investment.

ANNA (*with a certain resolution in her rich voice*)

Mother. Is my money safe?

MRS. CRILLY

We could give you the eighty pounds, Anna, but after that we would need all the help we could get from you.

ANNA

Yes, mother.

MRS. CRILLY (*again taking up a position*)

But if we help James Scollard to the place.

ANNA (*with determination*)

Whether Mr. Scollard gets the place or does not get the place, I'll want my fortune, mother.

MRS. CRILLY

Very well, Anna. If we could get him to come over. . . . (*She sits in arm chair*) There's a lamb in Ginnell's field; you might call in to-morrow and ask them to prepare it for us.

ANNA

Then grandfather is coming to dinner on Sunday?

MRS. CRILLY

We must get him to come.

[*Some one is coming up the passage. Anna's hand is on handle of door. She holds it open. Thomas Muskerry stands there.*

MUSKERRY (*pleased to see her*)
Well, Nancy!

ANNA
Good night, grandpapa. (*He regards her with fondness*)

MRS. CRILLY
Good night, father.

MUSKERRY
This Nancy girl is looking remarkably well. (*He turns to Mrs. Crilly*) Well, ma'am, and how are you? I've written that letter for that rascally Albert. [*He leaves his stick on table and goes to desk. Mrs. Crilly watches him. Anna comes to her. Muskerry addresses an envelope with some labour. Mrs. Crilly notices a tress of Anna's hair falling down. Anna kneels down beside her. She takes off Anna's cap, settles up the hair, and puts the cap on again. Having addressed the envelope, Muskerry holds up a piece of wax to the gas. He seals the letter, then holds it out.*

MUSKERRY
Here's the letter now, and maybe it's the last thing I can do for any of ye.

MRS. CRILLY
You are very good.
[*Muskerry goes to them.*

MUSKERRY
In season and out of season I've put myself at your service. I can do no more for ye.
[*She takes the letter from him. His resentment is breaking down. He sits on chair beside armchair. He speaks in a reconciling tone.*

MUSKERRY
You're looking well, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

I'm beginning to be well again.

MUSKERRY

And the infant? What age is he now?

MRS. CRILLY

Little Joseph is ten months old.

MUSKERRY

I dreamt of him last night. I thought Joseph became a bishop. He ought to be reared for the Church, Marianne. Well, well, I've nothing more to do with that. (*He settles himself in the armchair*) Did Christy Clarke bring in the papers?

ANNA

Christy Clarke hasn't been here at all, grandpapa.

MUSKERRY

Stand here till I look at you Nancy. (*Anna comes left of stove*) I wouldn't be surprised if you were the best-looking girl in the town, Nancy.

ANNA (*without any coquettishness*)

Anna Crilly is not going into competition with the others. (*She wraps the muffler round him, then kisses him*) Good night, grandpapa. (*She goes out by corridor door*)

MRS. CRILLY

Thank you for the letter for Albert.

MUSKERRY

I think, Marianne, it's the last thing I can do for you or yours.

MRS. CRILLY

Well, we can't tell a bad story of you, and things are well with us.

MUSKERRY

I'm glad to hear that. I was thinking of going to see you next week.

MRS. CRILLY

Come to dinner on Sunday. We are having a lamb.

MUSKERRY

What sort is the lamb?

MRS. CRILLY

Oh, a very young lamb. Anna will make the dressing for you.

MUSKERRY

I'll send round a bottle of wine. Perhaps we'll be in the way of celebrating something for Albert.

MRS. CRILLY

Nancy was saying that you might like to stay a few days with us.

MUSKERRY

Stay a few days! How could I do that, ma'am?

MRS. CRILLY

You could get somebody to look after the House. James Scollard would do it, and you could stay out for a few days.

MUSKERRY

Well, indeed, I'll do no such thing. What put it into your head to ask me this?

MRS. CRILLY

Nancy said —

MUSKERRY

Let the girl speak for herself. What's in your mind, woman?

MRS. CRILLY

Well, you're not looking well.

MUSKERRY

I'm as well as ever I was.

MRS. CRILLY

Others do not think so.

MUSKERRY

I suppose you heard I was late a few mornings. No matter for that. I'm as well as ever I was. No more talk about it; I'm going on with the work. (*He rises and goes over to desk*)

MRS. CRILLY

I'm sorry to say that no one else thinks as well of you as you do yourself.

MUSKERRY

Well, I'll hear no more about it, and that's enough about it. Why isn't Albert Crilly here?

MRS. CRILLY

Well, he was here, and he is coming back.

MUSKERRY

I'll want him. (*He takes up a card left on the desk. He turns round and reads* —"You have let the Guardians pay for a hundred tons. James Covey delivered only fifty tons of coal." Who left this here?

MRS. CRILLY

I suppose Albert left it for you.

MUSKERRY

The impudent rascal. How dare he address himself like that to me? (*He throws card on table*)

MRS. CRILLY

Perhaps he found something out in the books.

MUSKERRY

No matter whether he did or not, he'll have to have respect when he addresses me. Anyway it's a lie — a damn infernal lie. I was in the stores the other day,

and there was eighty tons of coal still there. Certainly twenty tons had been taken out of it. The Provision Check Account will show. (*He takes up a book and turns round. He goes back some pages. He lets the book fall. He stands there helpless*) I suppose you all are right in your judgment of me. I'm at my failing time. I'll have to leave this without pension or prospect. They'll send me away.

MRS. CRILLY

They had nothing against you before this.

MUSKERRY

I was spoken of as the pattern for the officials of Ireland.

MRS. CRILLY

If you resigned now —

MUSKERRY

Before this comes out. (*He looks for help*) Marianne, it would be like the blow to the struck ox if I lost my pension.

MRS. CRILLY

If you managed to get the pension you could pay the Guardians back in a lump sum.

MUSKERRY

If I resigned now, where would I go to?

MRS. CRILLY

It was always understood that you would stay with us.

MUSKERRY

No, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

You'll have the place to yourself. The boys will be going to school, and Albert will be away, too. Anna and myself will look after you.

MUSKERRY

I could stay for a while.

MRS. CRILLY

Oh, well, if you have a better place to go —

MUSKERRY

Remember what I said, Marianne. I've worked for you and yours, in season and out of season. There should be no more claims on me.

MRS. CRILLY

There are no more claims on you.

MUSKERRY

I'm willing to leave in the shop what I put into the shop. Let Anna know that it will come to her from me. I'll write to the Guardians to-night and I'll send in my resignation. I venture to think that they'll know their loss.

[*Mrs. Crilly goes out quietly by corridor door.*

MUSKERRY (*by himself*)

And I had made this place as fit for me as the nest for the wren. Wasn't he glad to write that card, the impudent rascal, with his tongue in his cheek? I'll consider it again. I won't leave this place till it fits myself to leave it.

[*Christy Clarke enters by corridor door with papers.*

MUSKERRY

They want me to resign from this place, Christy.

CHRISTY

You're thirty years here! Aren't you, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY

Thirty years, thirty years. Ay, Christy, thirty years; it's a long time. And I'm at my failing time. Perhaps I'm not able to do any more. Day after day

there would be troubles here, and I wouldn't be able to face them. And in the end I might lose my position. I'm going to write out my resignation. (*He goes to the desk and writes. Christy is at table. Muskerry turns round after writing*)

MUSKERRY

No one that comes here can have the same heart for the poor that I had. I was earning in the year of the famine. I saw able men struggling to get the work that would bring them a handful of Indian meal. And I saw the little children waiting on the roads for relief. (*He turns back and goes on with letter. Suddenly a bell in the House begins to toll*) What's that for, Christy?

CHRISTY

Malachi O'Rourk, the Prince, as they called him, is dead.

MUSKERRY

Aye, I gave orders to toll him when he died. He was an estated gentleman, and songs were made about his family. People used to annoy him, but he's gone from them now. Bring me a little whisky, Christy. [*Christy goes to Cabinet. Muskerry follows him.*

CHRISTY

There's none in the bottle, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY (*bitterly*)

No, I suppose not. And is that rascal, Albert Crilly, coming back?

CHRISTY

He's coming, Mister Muskerry. I left the novelette on the table. Miss Coghlan says it's a nice love story. "The Heart of Angelina," it is called.

MUSKERRY

I haven't the heart to read.

[*The bell continues to toll. Christy goes to door.*

CHRISTY

Good night, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

Good night, Christy.

[*Christy Clarke goes out through apartments. Thomas Muskerry is standing with hand on arm chair. The bell tolls.*

CURTAIN

ACT SECOND

In Crilly's, a month later. The room is the parlour off the shop. A glass door, right, leads into the shop, and the fireplace is above this door. In the back, right, is a cupboard door. Back is a window looking on the street. A door, left, leads to other rooms. There is a table near shop door and a horse-hair sofa back, an armchair at fire, and two leather-covered chairs about. Conventional pictures on walls, and two certificates framed, showing that some one in the house has passed some Intermediate examinations.

It is the forenoon of an April day. Mrs. Crilly is seated on sofa, going through a heap of account books. Anna Crilly is at window. Crofton Crilly enters from the shop.

CRILLY

It's all right, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

Well?

CRILLY

The Guardians insisted on appointing an outside person to take stock of the workhouse stores. It's the new regulation, you know. Well, the job lay between young Dobbs and Albert, and Albert has got it. I don't say but it was a near thing.

MRS. CRILLY

I hope Albert will know what to do.

CRILLY

He'll want to watch the points. Where's the Master?

MRS. CRILLY

He's in his room upstairs.

CRILLY

Was he not out this morning?

MRS. CRILLY

He's not dressed yet.

CRILLY

He was more particular when he was in the workhouse.

ANNA

I know who those two children are now. They are the new gas-manager's children.

CRILLY

He's a Scotchman.

ANNA

And married for the second time. Mother, Mrs. Dunne is going to the races. Such a sketch of a hat.

MRS. CRILLY

It would be better for her if she stayed at home and looked after her business.

ANNA

She won't have much business to look after soon. That's the third time her husband has come out of Farrell's public-house.

CRILLY

He's drinking with the Dispensary Doctor. Companions! They're the curse of this town, Marianne. (*He sits down*)

ANNA

She's walked into a blind man, hat and all. He's from the Workhouse.

CRILLY

He's the blind piper out of the workhouse, Myles Gorman.

MRS. CRILLY

There's no one within. You should go into the shop, Anna.

ANNA

Yes, mother. (*She crosses*) James Scollard is coming in, mother.

MRS. CRILLY

Very well, Anna. Stay in the shop until Mary comes.

[*Anna goes into the shop. Crilly moves about.*

MRS. CRILLY

You're very uneasy.

CRILLY

Yes, I am uneasy, Marianne. There's some presentment on me. Fifty pounds a year is a good pension for the old man. He's a month out now. He ought to be getting an instalment.

[*Anna comes in from shop.*

ANNA

Mother, the doctor's daughter is in the shop.

MRS. CRILLY

What does she want?

ANNA (*imitating an accent*)

Send up a pound of butter, two pounds of sugar, and a pound of tea.

MRS. CRILLY

These people are paying nobody. But we can't refuse her. I suppose we'll have to send them up. Be very distant with her, Anna.

ANNA

I've kept her waiting. Here's a letter, mother.

MRS. CRILLY (*taking letter*)
When did it come, Anna?

ANNA
It's just handed in.
[*Anna goes out. Mrs. Crilly opens letter.*

MRS. CRILLY
It's from the bank. They want me to call. What does the bank manager want with me, I wonder?

CRILLY
I have something to tell you, Marianne. I'll tell you in a while. (*He takes a turn up and down*)

MRS. CRILLY
What do you want to tell me?

CRILLY
Prepare your mind, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
What is it?

CRILLY
I owe you money, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
Money! How do you owe me money?

CRILLY
That cute boy, James Covey, who took in all the town —

MRS. CRILLY (*rising*)
Covey! My God! You backed a bill for him?

CRILLY
I'll make a clean breast of it. I did.

MRS. CRILLY (*with fear in her eyes*)
How much is it?

CRILLY (*walking away to window*)
I'll come to that, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

Did any one back the bill with you?

CRILLY

I obliged the fellow. No one backed the bill with me.

MRS. CRILLY

Does any one know of it?

CRILLY

No, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

The bank. . . . Tell me what happened.

CRILLY

The bank manager sent for me when he came to the town after Covey cleared.

MRS. CRILLY

We had four hundred pounds in the bank.

CRILLY

We had, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

Tell me how much was the bill.

CRILLY

There's no use in beating about the bush. The bill was for three hundred pounds.

MRS. CRILLY

And what has the bank done?

CRILLY

I'm sorry to say, Marianne, the bank has taken the money over from our account.

MRS. CRILLY

You've ruined us at last, Crofton Crilly.

CRILLY

You should never forgive me, Marianne. I'll go to America and begin life again. (*He turns to go out by shop*)

MRS. CRILLY

We have no money left.

CRILLY

A hundred pounds, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

That's Anna's money.

CRILLY

Scollard should be satisfied.

MRS. CRILLY

Anna insists on getting her money.

CRILLY

Very well, Marianne. I'll leave it all to yourself.

[*James Scollard comes in. Anna is behind him. Scollard has an account book in his hand.*

SCOLLARD

Good morning, Mrs. Crilly. Good morning, Mr. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY

Good morning, Mr. Scollard.

[*Crofton Crilly turns to go.*

ANNA

Don't go, father.

SCOLLARD

Don't go, Mr. Crilly. I have something particular to say to yourself and Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY

Sit down, Mr. Scollard.

[*Anna brings chair, and Scollard sits center. Anna stands behind him. Mrs. Crilly sits left of him.*

SCOLLARD

I am here to propose for the hand of your daughter, Miss Anna Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY

We have nothing to say against your proposal, Mr. Scollard.

CRILLY

Won't you take something, James?

SCOLLARD

No, thanks, Mr. Crilly. I never touch intoxicants.

[*Crofton Crilly goes into shop.*

MRS. CRILLY

We couldn't wish for a better match for Anna. But I feel bound to tell you, Mr. Scollard, that we have had a very severe loss in our business.

ANNA

What is it, mother?

MRS. CRILLY

I don't mind telling you. Mr. Crilly has made himself responsible for a bill on the bank.

SCOLLARD

In whose interest, Mrs. Crilly?

MRS. CRILLY

He backed a bill for James Covey. A bill for three hundred pounds.

ANNA

Oh, mother!

MRS. CRILLY

It's a dead sure loss. I don't know what we are to do, Anna.

SCOLLARD

This is very bad, Mrs. Crilly.

[*Crofton Crilly comes back from shop. He brings in a glass of whisky. He puts whisky on chimney-piece.*

MRS. CRILLY

The bank has taken over three hundred pounds from our account.

CRILLY

Perhaps Scollard —

SCOLLARD

What were you saying, Mr. Crilly?

CRILLY

Oh, I was just thinking — about a bill you know — If some one would go security for us at the bank —

ANNA

Father, what are you saying?

MRS. CRILLY

It's unnecessary to talk like that. In spite of your foolishness, we still have a balance at the bank.

ANNA

My portion comes to me from my grandmother.

SCOLLARD

May I ask, Mrs. Crilly, is Miss Crilly's portion safe?

MRS. CRILLY

It is safe, Mr. Scollard.

SCOLLARD

I have been definitely appointed Master of the Union, and I may say that Anna and myself are anxious to marry.

MRS. CRILLY

It needn't be soon, Mr. Scollard.

SCOLLARD

After Easter, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY

But that's very soon.

SCOLLARD

I am anxious to settle down, Mrs. Crilly. I'm on my

way to a meeting of the Board of Guardians, but before I go I'd like to have some more information about your loss.

MRS. CRILLY

Anna's portion is not touched, but we could hardly afford to let the money go from us now.

SCOLLARD

Is that so, Mrs. Crilly?

MRS. CRILLY

Three hundred pounds is a very severe loss.

SCOLLARD

Very severe, indeed. Still, you understand, Mrs. Crilly, the difficulties of taking such a step as marriage without adequate provision.

CRILLY

Damn it all, man, Marianne and myself married without anything at all.

MRS. CRILLY (*bitterly*)

Anna won't be such a fool as her mother.

CRILLY

Well, Scollard has his position, and we helped him to it.

SCOLLARD

I acknowledge that.

ANNA

Isn't my portion eighty pounds, mother?

MRS. CRILLY

Yes, Anna. But I'd like to tell Mr. Scollard that it would come as a strain on us to let the money go at once.

SCOLLARD

I daresay, Mrs. Crilly.

ANNA

But, mother, wouldn't the money be safer with us?

MRS. CRILLY

Well, I leave the whole thing in the hands of Mr. Scollard.

SCOLLARD

Anna and myself have been talking things over, Mrs. Crilly.

ANNA

And we don't want to begin life in a poor way.

SCOLLARD

We see the advantage of being always solvent, Mrs. Crilly.

ANNA

James has ambitions, and there's no reason why he shouldn't venture for the post of Secretary of the County Council when old Mr. Dobbs retires.

SCOLLARD

In a few years, Mrs. Crilly, when I had more official experience and some reputation.

ANNA

Then he would have seven or eight hundred a year.

SCOLLARD

As I said, a man like myself would want to be in a perfectly solvent position.

ANNA

Besides, James has no money of his own.

SCOLLARD

I never had the chance of putting money by — Family calls, Mrs. Crilly.

ANNA

And we don't want to begin life in a poor way.

MRS. CRILLY

You won't want the whole of the money. I'll give you forty pounds now.

CRILLY

And forty when the first child is born.

ANNA

Oh, father, how can you say such a thing?

SCOLLARD

I need only say this. Anna and myself were talking over affairs, and we came to the conclusion it would be best not to start with less than eighty pounds. (*He rises*) I have to go down to the Board Room now, for there is a meeting of the Guardians. (*He goes towards door*)

CRILLY

Won't you take a glass?

SCOLLARD

No, thanks, Mr. Crilly. I never touch stimulants. Good day to you all.

[*He goes out. Crofton Crilly goes after him.*

MRS. CRILLY

Anna, you won't be deprived of your money.

ANNA

Then what's the difficulty, mother?

MRS. CRILLY

Let half of the money remain with us for a while.

ANNA

But, mother, if I don't get all my money, what security have I that what's left will be good in six months or a year?

MRS. CRILLY

I'll watch the money for you, Anna.

ANNA

It's hard to keep a hold on money in a town where business is going down.

MRS. CRILLY

Forty pounds will be given to you and forty pounds will be kept safe for you.

ANNA

Forty pounds! There's not a small farmer comes into the shop but his daughter has more of a dowry than forty pounds.

MRS. CRILLY

Think of all who marry without a dowry at all.

ANNA

You wouldn't have me go to James Scollard without a dowry?

MRS. CRILLY

Well, you know the way we're situated. If you insist on getting eighty pounds we'll have to make an overdraft on the bank, and, in the way business is, I don't know how we'll ever recover it.

ANNA

There won't be much left out of eighty pounds when we get what suits us in furniture.

MRS. CRILLY

I could let you have some furniture.

ANNA

No, mother. We want to start in a way that is different from this house.

MRS. CRILLY

You'll want all the money together?

ANNA

All of it, mother.

MRS. CRILLY

You'll have to get it so. But you're very hard, Anna.

ANNA

This house would teach any one to look to themselves.

MRS. CRILLY

Come upstairs. (*Anna goes, left*) Three hundred pounds of a loss. Eighty pounds with that. I'm terrified when I think. (*She goes after Anna*)

[*Crofton Crilly comes in from shop. He takes glass of whisky from table, and sits down in arm chair.*

CRILLY

I don't know what Marianne's to do at all. She has a shocking lot to contend with. Can anything be got from the old man, I wonder?

[*Albert Crilly comes in by door, left.*

ALBERT

Well, pa.

CRILLY

Well, Albert. What's the news in the town, Albert?

ALBERT

They say that you've backed a bill for Covey.

CRILLY

If your mother hears that kind of talk she'll be vexed, Albert.

ALBERT

But did you back the bill?

CRILLY

For Heaven's sake, let me alone, Albert. Yes, I backed the bill.

ALBERT

How much?

CRILLY

You'll hear all about it from your mother.

ALBERT

They say the bill was for three hundred.

CRILLY

It was three or thereabouts.

ALBERT

'Pon my word, father, the mother will have to take out a mandamus against you.

CRILLY (*with parental dignity*)

Don't talk to me in that way, Sir.

ALBERT

It's scandalous, really. I expect you've ruined the business.

CRILLY

I hate the world and all its works and pomps.

ALBERT

I believe you've done for the business. I'm going away.

CRILLY

Then you've got the other appointment?

ALBERT

Temporary clerkship in the Land Department. I wonder would the mother let me have the money for clothes?

CRILLY (*desperately*)

Don't mention it at all to her.

ALBERT

I have a card from a Dublin tailor in my pocket. If I could pay him for one suit, I could get another on tick.

CRILLY

I tell you not to talk to your mother about money. That fellow, Scollard, has put her out.

ALBERT

How's that?

CRILLY

Money again. Wants the whole of Anna's portion down. And Anna's backing him up, too. I don't know how your mother can stand it. I don't like Scollard. Then you won't be staying on, Albert, to do the stocktaking in the Workhouse?

ALBERT

No; they'll have to get some one else. I'm glad to be out of that job.

CRILLY

I'm not sorry, Albert.

ALBERT

The mother would expect me to do something queer in my report.

CRILLY

Between you and me, Albert, women aren't acquainted with the working of affairs, and they expect unusual things to happen. Who will they make stocktaker, now?

ALBERT

Young Dobbs, likely. I suppose the whole business about the coal will come out then?

CRILLY

I suppose it will; but say nothing about it now, Albert. Let the hare sit.

ALBERT

What does the old man think about it now?

CRILLY

He's very close to himself. I think he has forgotten all about it.

ALBERT

I wouldn't say so.

CRILLY

Who's that in the shop, Albert?

ALBERT

Felix Tournour.

CRILLY (*rising*)

I wonder what they think about Scollard in the Poor-house. (*He and Albert go into the shop as Muskerry enters from left*)

[*Muskerry is untidily dressed. His boots are unlaced. He walks across the room and speaks pettishly.*

MUSKERRY

They haven't brought my soup yet. They won't give much of their time to me. I'm disappointed in Anna Crilly. Well, a certain share in this shop was to have gone to Anna Crilly. I'll get that share, and I'll hoard it up myself. I'll hoard it up. And the fifty pounds of my pension, I'll hoard that up, too.

[*Albert comes in from shop.*

MUSKERRY

That's a black fire that's in the grate. I don't like the coal that comes into this place.

ALBERT

Coal, eh, grandpapa.

MUSKERRY

I said coal.

ALBERT

We haven't good stores here.

MUSKERRY

Confound you for your insolence.

ALBERT

Somebody you know is in the shop — Felix Tournour.

MUSKERRY

Bid Tournour come in to me.

ALBERT (*talking into the shop*)

You're wanted here, Tournour. Come in now or I'll entertain the boss with "The Devil's Rambles." (*He turns to Muskerry*) I was given the job of stock-taking.

MUSKERRY

That's a matter for yourself.

ALBERT

I don't think I'll take the job now.

MUSKERRY

Why won't you take it?

ALBERT

I don't know what to say about the fifty tons of coal.

MUSKERRY

I was too precipitate about the coal. But don't have me at the loss of fifty pounds through any of your smartness.

ALBERT

All right, grandfather; I'll see you through.

MUSKERRY

Confound you for a puppy.

[*Felix Tournour enters. He looks prosperous. He has on a loud check suit. He wears a red tie and a peaked cap.*

ALBERT

The Master wants to speak to you, Tournour.

TOURNOUR

What Master.

ALBERT

The boss, Tournour, the boss.

MUSKERRY

I want you, and that's enough for you, Tournour.

ALBERT

I suppose you don't know, grandpapa, that Tournour has a middling high position in the Poorhouse now.

MUSKERRY

What are you saying?

ALBERT

Tournour is Ward-master now.

MUSKERRY

I wasn't given any notice of that.

ALBERT

Eh, Tournour —

"The Devil went out for a ramble at night,
Through Garrisowen Union to see every sight.
He saw Felix Tournour —

TOURNOUR

"He saw one in comfort, of that you'll be sure.
With his back to the fire stands Felix Tournour."

[*He puts his back to fire.*

ALBERT

Well, so-long, gents. (*He goes out by shop door*)

MUSKERRY

Let me see you, Tournour.

TOURNOUR

I'm plain to be seen.

MUSKERRY

Who recommended you for Ward-master?

TOURNOUR

Them that had the power.

MUSKERRY

I would not have done it, Tournour.

TOURNOUR

No. And still, d'ye see, I'm up and not down. Well, I'll be going.

MUSKERRY

Come back here, Tournour. I made it a rule that no Ward-master should let drink be brought in to the paupers.

TOURNOUR

It's a pity you're not Master still!

MUSKERRY

What are you saying?

TOURNOUR

It's a pity that you're not still the Master over us.

MUSKERRY

Tournour, you're forgetting yourself.

TOURNOUR

Well, maybe you are still the Master.

MUSKERRY

How dare you speak to me with such effrontery? How dare you?

TOURNOUR

I dunno. I'm going away now, if your *honour* has nothing more to say to me. (*He turns to go*)

MUSKERRY

You shall not. You shall not, I say.

TOURNOUR

What?

MUSKERRY

You shall not go away until you've apologised to me.

TOURNOUR

Don't be talking, Thomas Muskerry. You're not Master over me.

MUSKERRY

Not the Master over you?

TOURNOUR

No. There's an end to your sway, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

Go out of the house. No, stay here. You think I'm out of the Workhouse. No. That's not so. I've claims, great claims, on it still. Not for nothing was I there for thirty years, the pattern for the officials of Ireland.

TOURNOUR

Twenty-nine years, I'm telling you.

MUSKERRY

The Guardians will take account of me.

TOURNOUR

And maybe they would, too.

MUSKERRY

What's that you're saying?

TOURNOUR

The Guardians might take an account of Thomas Muskerry in a way he mightn't like. (*He goes to door*)

MUSKERRY

Come back here, Felix Tournour.

TOURNOUR

I'm not your sub-servant.

MUSKERRY

Stand here before me.

TOURNOUR

You and your before me! Your back to heaven and your belly to hell.

MUSKERRY

Go away. Go away out of this.

TOURNOUR

Don't try to down-face me. I know something about you.

MUSKERRY

About me!

TOURNOUR

Aye, you and your fifty tons of coal. (*Muskerry goes back from him*) Great claims on the Workhouse have you. The Guardians will take account of you. Will they? Talk to them about the fifty tons of coal. Go and do that, my pattern of the officials of Ireland!

[*Tournour goes out by shop. Muskerry stands with his hands on the arm chair.*

MUSKERRY

This minute I'll go down to the Guardians and make my complaint. (*He notices his appearance*) I'm going about all day with my boots unlaced. I'm falling into bad ways, bad, slovenly ways. And my coat needs brushing, too. (*He takes off his coat and goes to window and brushes it*) That's Myles Gorman going back to the Workhouse. I couldn't walk with my head held as high as that. In this house I am losing my uprightness. I'll do more than lace my boots and brush my coat. I'll go down to the Guardians and I'll pay them back their fifty pounds.

[*Anna Crilly comes in from left with a bowl of soup.*

ANNA

Here's your soup, grandpapa.

MUSKERRY

I can't take it now, Anna. (*He puts on his coat*)

ANNA

Are you going out, grandpapa?

MUSKERRY

I'm going before the meeting of the Board of Guardians.

ANNA

Are you, grandpapa?

MUSKERRY

Yes, Anna, I am. I'm going to pay them back their fifty pounds.

ANNA

And have you the fifty pounds?

MUSKERRY

Your mother has it for me.

ANNA

Sit down, grandpapa, and take your soup.

MUSKERRY

No, Anna, I won't take anything until my mind is at rest about the coal. A certain person has spoken to me in a way I'll never submit to be spoken to again.

[*Mrs. Crilly comes in.*

MRS. CRILLY

What has happened to you?

MUSKERRY

Felix Tournour knows about the coal, Marianne. He can disgrace me before the world.

ANNA

And grandpapa wants to go before the Guardians and pay them back the fifty pounds.

MRS. CRILLY

Wait until we consult Mr. Scollard.

[*Anna goes out.*

MUSKERRY

No, Marianne. I'm not going to be a party to this any longer. I'm going before the Guardians, and I'll pay them back their fifty pounds.

MRS. CRILLY

Fifty pounds. From what place is fifty pounds to come so easily?

MUSKERRY

I'll ask you to give me the fifty pounds, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

I'll do no such thing. Anna is getting married, and she claims her fortune.

MUSKERRY

Anna getting married. This was kept from me. And who is Anna getting married to?

MRS. CRILLY

To James Scollard.

MUSKERRY

To James Scollard. And so Anna is getting married to my successor, James Scollard. My successor. How well I knew there was some such scheme behind shifting me out of the Workhouse. And Anna Crilly was against me all the time. Well, well, well. I'll remember this.

MRS. CRILLY

I'm at great losses since you came here.

MUSKERRY

I'm at greater losses, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY

What losses are you at?

MUSKERRY

The loss of my trust, the loss of my dignity, my self-respect, and —

MRS. CRILLY

I think we did all we could for you.

MUSKERRY

I'm going out now to pay back the Guardians the sum

due to them from me. I want fifty pounds from you. I claim it, and I have a right to claim it.

MRS. CRILLY

We have no money at all. Listen. Crofton Crilly backed a bill for James Covey, and three hundred pounds has been taken from our account.

MUSKERRY

Three hundred pounds!

MRS. CRILLY

Yes. Three hundred pounds.

MUSKERRY

He backed a bill for three hundred pounds. And do you think, Marianne Crilly, there can be any luck, in a house where such a thing could happen? I tell you there is no luck nor grace in your house. (*He puts on his hat and goes to cupboard to get his stick. He opens the cupboard. He turns round*)

MUSKERRY (*greatly moved*)

My God, my God. I'm made cry at the things that happen in this house.

MRS. CRILLY

What is it?

MUSKERRY

The good meat I brought in. There it is on the floor and the cat mangling it. I'll go out of this house, and I'll never put foot into it again.

MRS. CRILLY

And where will you go?

MUSKERRY

I'll go before the Board of Guardians and I'll ask them to provide for me.

MRS. CRILLY

What do you want me to do for you?

MUSKERRY

Give me fifty pounds, so that I can pay them off now.

MRS. CRILLY

Haven't I told you the way I'm straitened for money?

MUSKERRY

You have still in the bank what would save my name.

MRS. CRILLY

Don't be unreasonable. I have to provide for my children.

MUSKERRY

Your children. Yes, you have to provide for your children. I provided for them long enough. And now you would take my place, my honour, and my self-respect, and provide for them over again. (*He goes out*)

MRS. CRILLY

I'll have to put up with this, too.

[*Anna re-enters.*

ANNA

Where has he gone, mother?

MRS. CRILLY

He has gone down to the Workhouse.

ANNA

What is he going to do, mother?

MRS. CRILLY

He says he will ask the Guardians to provide for him.

ANNA

It's not likely they'll do that for a man with a pension of fifty pounds a year.

MRS. CRILLY

I don't know what will happen to us.

ANNA

He'll come back, mother.

MRS. CRILLY

He will. But everything will have been made public, and the money will have to be paid.

ANNA (*at the window*)

There he is going down the street, mother.

MRS. CRILLY

Which way?

ANNA

Towards the Workhouse. And here's the doctor's daughter coming into the shop again, mother.

MRS. CRILLY

I'll go out and see her myself. (*As she goes out she hands Anna a cheque*) That's the last cheque I'll be able to make out. There's your eighty pounds, Anna. (*She goes into the shop*)

ANNA

We can begin to get the furniture now.

[*She sits down at the table and makes some calculation with a pencil.*

CURTAIN

ACT THIRD

The infirm ward in the Workhouse. Entrance from corridor, right. Forward, left, are three beds with bedding folded upon them. Back, left, is a door leading into Select Ward. This door is closed, and a large key is in lock. Fireplace with a grating around it, left. Back, right, is a window with little leaded panes.

It is noon on a May day, but the light inside the ward is feeble.

Two paupers are seated at fire. One of them, Mickie Cripes, is a man of fifty, stooped and hollow-chested, but with quick blue eyes. The other man, Tom Shanley, is not old, but he looks broken and listless. Myles Gorman, still in pauper dress, is standing before window, an expectant look on his face.

Thomas Muskerry enters from corridor. He wears his own clothes, but he has let them get into disorder. His hair and beard are disordered, and he seems very much broken down. Nevertheless, he looks as if his mind were composed.

MUSKERRY

It's dark in here, Michael.

CRIPES

It is, sir.

MUSKERRY

I find it very spiritless after coming up from the chapel. Don't pass your whole day here. Go down into the yard. (*He stands before the window*) This is the first fine day, and you ought to go out along

the country road. Ask the Master for leave. It's the month of May, and you'll be glad of the sight of the grass and the smell of the bushes. Now here's a remarkable thing. I venture to think that the like of this has never happened before. Here are the bees swarming at the window pane.

GORMAN

You'll hear my pipes on the road to-day. That's as sure as the right hand is on my body. (*He goes out by corridor door*)

CRIPES

Myles Gorman must have been glad to hear that buzzing.

MUSKERRY

Why was Myles glad to hear it?

SHANLEY

He was leaving on the first fine day.

CRIPES

The buzzing at the pane would let any one know that the air is nice for a journey.

MUSKERRY

I am leaving to-day, myself.

CRIPES

And where are you going, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY

I'm going to a place of my own.

[*Muskerry goes into the Select Ward.*

CRIPES

I'll tell you what brought Thomas Muskerry back to the workhouse to be an inmate in it. Living in a bad house. Living with his own. That's what brought him back. And that's what left me here, too.

SHANLEY (*listlessly*)

The others have the flour, and we may hawk the bran. [*An old pauper comes into the ward. His face looks bleached. He has the handle of a sweeping-brush for a staff. He moves about the ward, muttering to himself. He seats himself on chair, right.*

THE OLD MAN (*speaking as if thinking aloud*)

I was at twelve o'clock Mass. Now one o'clock would be a late Mass. I was at Mass at one o'clock. Wouldn't that be a long time to keep a priest, and he fasting the whole time?

CRIPES

I'll tell you what Thomas Muskerry did when he left the bad house he was in. (*He puts coal on the fire*)

THE OLD MAN

I was at one o'clock Mass in Skibbereen. I know where Skibbereen is well. In the County Cork. Cork is a big county. As big as Dublin and Wicklow. That's where the people died when there was the hunger.

CRIPES

He came before the meeting of the Guardians, and he told them he owed them the whole of his year's pension. Then he got some sort of a stroke, and he broke down. And the Guardians gave him the Select Ward there for himself.

SHANLEY

They did well for him.

CRIPES

Why wouldn't they give him the Select Ward? It's right that he'd get the little room, and not have to make down the pauper's bed with the rest of us.

SHANLEY

He was at the altar to-day, and he stayed in the chapel after Mass.

CRIPES

He'll be here shortly.

THE OLD MAN

Skibbereen! That's where the people died when there was the hunger. Men and women without coffins, or even their clothes off. Just buried. Skibbereen I remember well, for I was a whole man then. And the village. For there are people living in it yet. They didn't all die.

SHANLEY

We'll have somebody else in the Select Ward this evening.

CRIPES

That's what they were talking about. The nuns are sending a patient up here.

SHANLEY

I suppose the Ward-master will be in here to regulate the room. (*He rises*)

CRIPES

Aye, the Ward-master. Felix Tournour, the Ward-master. You've come to your own place at last, Felix Tournour.

SHANLEY

Felix Tournour will be coming the master over me if he finds me here. (*Shanley goes out*)

CRIPES

Felix Tournour! That's the lad that will be coming in with his head up like the gander that's after beating down a child.

[*Christy Clarke enters. He carries a little portmanteau.*

CHRISTY

Is Mr. Muskerry here?

CRIPES

He's in the room. (*A sound of water splashing and the movements of a heavy person are heard*) Will you be speaking with him, young fellow?

CHRISTY

I will.

CRIPES

Tell him, like a good little boy, that the oul' men would be under a favour to him if he left a bit of tobacco. You won't forget that?

CHRISTY

I won't forget it.

CRIPES

I don't want to be in the way of Felix Tournour. We're going down to the yard, but we'll see Mr. Muskerry when he's going away.

[*Cripes goes out.*

MUSKERRY (*within*)

Is that you, Christy Clarke?

CHRISTY

It is, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

Have you any news, Christy?

CHRISTY

No news, except that my mother is in the cottage, and is expecting you to-day.

MUSKERRY

I'll be in the cottage to-day, Christy. I'm cleaning myself. (*A sound of splashing and moving about*) The Guardians were good to get the little house for me. I'd as lieve be there as in a mansion. There's about

half an acre of land to the place, and I'll do work on the ground from time to time, for it's a good thing for a man to get the smell of the clay.

CHRISTY

And how are you in health, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY

I'm very well in health. I was anointed, you know, and after that I mended miraculously.

CHRISTY

And what about the pension?

MUSKERRY

I'm getting three hundred pounds. They asked me to realize the pension. I hope I have life enough before me. (*He comes out. He has on trousers, coat, and starched shirt. The shirt is soiled and crushed*)

MUSKERRY

On Saturdays I'll do my marketing. I'll come into the town, and I'll buy the bit of meat for my dinner on Sunday. But what are you doing with this portmanteau, Christy?

CHRISTY

I'm going away myself.

MUSKERRY

To a situation, is it?

CHRISTY

To a situation in Dublin.

MUSKERRY

I wish you luck, Christy. (*He shakes hands with the boy, and sits down on a chair*) I was dreaming on new things all last night. New shirts, new sheets, everything new.

CHRISTY

I want to be something.

MUSKERRY

What do you want to be?

CHRISTY

A writer.

MUSKERRY

A writer of books, is it?

CHRISTY

Yes, a writer of books.

MUSKERRY

Listen, now, and tell me do you hear anything. That's the sound of bees swarming at the window. That's a good augury for you, Christy.

CHRISTY

All life's before me.

MUSKERRY

Will you give heed to what I tell you?

CHRISTY

I'll give heed to it, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

Live a good life.

CHRISTY

I give heed to you.

MUSKERRY

Your mother had great hardship in rearing you.

CHRISTY

I know that, Mr. Muskerry, but now I'm able for the world.

MUSKERRY

I wish success to all your efforts. Be very careful of your personal appearance.

CHRISTY

I will, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

Get yourself a new cravat before you leave the town.

CHRISTY

I'll get it.

MUSKERRY

I think I'd look better myself if I had a fresher shirt.

CHRISTY

I saw clean shirts of yours before the fire last night in my mother's house.

MUSKERRY

I wish I could get one before I leave this place.

CHRISTY

Will I run off and get one for you?

MUSKERRY

Would you, Christy? Would it be too much trouble?

[*Muskerry rises.*

CHRISTY

I'll go now.

MUSKERRY

You're a very willing boy, Christy, and you're sure to get on. (*He goes to a little broken mirror on the wall*) I am white and loose of flesh, and that's not a good sign with me, Christy. I'll tell you something. If I were staying here to-night, it's the pauper's bed I'd have to sleep on.

[*Mrs. Crilly comes to the door.*

MRS. CRILLY

Well, I see you're making ready for your departure.

MUSKERRY (*who has become uneasy*)

I am ready for my departure.

MRS. CRILLY

And this young man has come for you, I suppose?

MUSKERRY

This young man is minding his own business.

CHRISTY

I'm going out now to get a shirt for the Master.

MRS. CRILLY

A starched shirt, I suppose, Christy. Go down to our house, and tell Mary to give you one of the shirts that are folded up.

MUSKERRY

The boy will go where he was bid go.

MRS. CRILLY

Oh, very well. Run, Christy, and do the message for the Master.

[*Christy Clarke goes out.*

MUSKERRY

I don't know what brought you here to-day.

MRS. CRILLY

Well, I wanted to see you.

MUSKERRY

You could come to see me when I was settled down.

MRS. CRILLY

Settled in the cottage the Guardians have given you?

MUSKERRY

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. CRILLY (*with nervous excitement, restrained*)

No one of us will ever go near the place.

MUSKERRY

Well, you'll please yourself.

MRS. CRILLY

You put a slight on us all when you go there to live.

MUSKERRY

Well, I've lived with you to my own loss.

MRS. CRILLY

Our house is the best house in the town, and I'm the nearest person to you.

MUSKERRY

Say nothing more about that.

MRS. CRILLY

Well, maybe you do right not to live with us, but you ought not to forsake us altogether.

MUSKERRY

And what do you mean by forsaking you altogether?

MRS. CRILLY

When you leave the place and do not even turn your step in our direction it's a sign to all who want to know that you forsake us altogether.

MUSKERRY

What do you want me to do?

MRS. CRILLY

Come up to Cross Street with me, have dinner and spend the night with us. People would have less to talk about if you did that.

MUSKERRY

You always have a scheme.

MRS. CRILLY

Come to us for this evening itself.

MUSKERRY

I wish you wouldn't trouble me, woman. Can't you see that when I go out of this I want to go to my own place?

MRS. CRILLY

You can go there to-morrow.

MUSKERRY

Preparations are made for me.

MRS. CRILLY

You don't know what preparations.

MUSKERRY

Two pounds of the best beef-steak were ordered to be sent up to-day.

MRS. CRILLY

I wouldn't trust that woman, Mrs. Clarke, to cook potatoes.

MUSKERRY

Well, I'll trust her, ma'am.

MRS. CRILLY (*taking Muskerry's sleeve*)

Don't go to-day, anyway.

MUSKERRY

You're very anxious to get me to come with you. What do you want from me?

MRS. CRILLY

We want nothing from you. You know how insecure our business is. When it's known in the town that you forsake us, everybody will close in on us.

MUSKERRY

God knows I did everything that a man could do for you and yours. I won't forget you. I haven't much life left to me, and I want to live to myself.

MRS. CRILLY

I know. Sure I lie awake at night, too tired to sleep, and long to get away from the things that are pressing in on me. I know that people are glad of their own way, and glad to live in the way that they like. When I heard the birds stirring I cried to be away in some place where I won't hear the thing that's always knocking at my head. The business has to be minded, and it's slipping away from us like water. And listen, if my confinement comes on me and I worried

as I was last year, nothing can save me. I'll die, surely.

MUSKERRY (*moved*)

What more do you want me to do?

MRS. CRILLY

Stay with us for a while, so that we'll have the name of your support.

MUSKERRY

I'll come back to you in a week.

MRS. CRILLY

That wouldn't do at all. There's a reason for what I ask. The town must know that you are with us from the time you leave this.

MUSKERRY (*with emotion*)

God help me with you all, and God direct me what to do.

MRS. CRILLY

It's not in you to let us down.

[*Muskerry turns away. His head is bent. Mrs. Crilly goes to him.*

MUSKERRY

Will you never be done taking from me? I want to leave this and go to a place of my own.

[*Muskerry puts his hand to his eyes. When he lowers his hand again Mrs. Crilly lays hers in it. Christy Clarke comes in. Muskerry turns to him. Muskerry has been crying.*

MUSKERRY

Well, Christy, I'll be sending you back on another message.

[*Mrs. Crilly makes a sign to Christy not to speak.*

MUSKERRY

Go to your mother and tell her —

CHRISTY

I met my mother outside.

MUSKERRY

Did she get the things that were sent to her?

CHRISTY

My mother was sent away from the cottage.

MUSKERRY

Who sent your mother away from the cottage?

CHRISTY

Mrs. Crilly sent her away.

MUSKERRY

And why did you do that, ma'am?

MRS. CRILLY

I sent Mary to help to prepare the place for you, and the woman was impertinent to Mary —

MUSKERRY

Well, ma'am?

MRS. CRILLY

I sent the woman away.

MUSKERRY

And so you take it on yourself to dispose of the servants in my house?

MRS. CRILLY

I daresay you'll take the woman's part against my daughter.

MUSKERRY

No, ma'am, I'll take no one's side, but I'll tell you this. I want my own life, and I won't be interfered with.

MRS. CRILLY

I'm sorry for what occurred, and I'll apologise to the boy's mother if you like.

MUSKERRY

I won't be interfered with, I tell you. From this day out I'm free of my own life. And now, Christy Clarke, go down stairs and tell the Master, Mr. Scollard, that I want to see him.

[*Christy Clarke goes out.*

MRS. CRILLY

I may as well tell you something else. None of the things you ordered were sent up to the cottage.

MUSKERRY

Do you tell me that?

MRS. CRILLY

I went round to the shop, and everything you ordered was sent to us.

MUSKERRY

And what is the meaning of that, ma'am?

MRS. CRILLY

If the town knew you were going from us, in a week we would have to put up the shutters.

MUSKERRY

Well, I'll walk out of this, and when I come to the road I'll go my own way.

MRS. CRILLY

We can't prevent you.

MUSKERRY

No, ma'am, you can't prevent me.

MRS. CRILLY

You've got your discharge, I suppose?

MUSKERRY

I've given three hours' notice, and I'll get my discharge now.

MRS. CRILLY (*at corridor door*)

We can't prevent you going if you have the doctor's discharge.

MUSKERRY

The doctor's discharge! He would have given it to me —

MRS. CRILLY

You can't leave without the doctor's sanction.

MUSKERRY

Out of this house I will go to-day.

[*James Scollard enters.*

SCOLLARD

I believe you want to see me, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

I do, Mr. Scollard. I am leaving the house.

SCOLLARD

I will be glad to take up the necessary formalities for you, Mr. Muskerry.

MRS. CRILLY

First of all, has the doctor marked my father off the infirmary list?

SCOLLARD

No, Mrs. Crilly. Now that I recall the list, he has not.

MUSKERRY

I waited after Mass to-day, and I missed seeing him.

MRS. CRILLY

My father was seriously ill only a short time ago, and I do not believe he is in a fit state to leave the infirmary.

SCOLLARD

That certainly has to be considered. Without the doctor explicitly sending you down to the body of

the house you are hardly under my jurisdiction, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

Mr. Scollard, I ask you to give me leave to go out of the Workhouse for a day. You can do this on your own responsibility.

MRS. CRILLY

In the present state of his mind it's not likely he would return to-night. Then if anything happened him your situation is at stake.

MUSKERRY

I'm not a pauper. I'll go out of this to-day without leave or license from any of you.

SCOLLARD

As you know yourself, Mr. Muskerry, it would be as much as my situation is worth to let you depart in that way.

MUSKERRY

Well, go I will.

SCOLLARD

I cannot permit it, Mr. Muskerry. I say it with the greatest respect.

MUSKERRY

How long will you keep me here?

SCOLLARD

Until the doctor visits the house.

MUSKERRY

That will be on Monday morning.

SCOLLARD

And this is Saturday, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY

And where will you put me until Monday?

SCOLLARD

Other arrangements will be made for you.

MUSKERRY

It's the pauper's bed you would give me!

SCOLLARD

The old arrangements will continue. Can I do anything further for you, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY

No, you can do nothing further for me. It's a great deal you have done for me! It's the pauper's bed you have given me! (*He goes into the Select Ward*)

MRS. CRILLY

Sit down, Mr. Scollard. I want to speak to you.

[*Mrs. Crilly seats herself at the table. Scollard sits down also.*

MRS. CRILLY

The bank manager is in the town to-day, and there are people waiting to tell him whether my father goes to our house or goes away from us.

SCOLLARD

No doubt there are, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY

But you have nothing to do with that, Mr. Scollard.

SCOLLARD

No, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY

I have my own battle to fight, and a hard battle it is. I have to make bits of myself to mind everything and be prepared for everything.

SCOLLARD

No doubt, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY

There are people who will blame me, but they cannot see into my mind.

SCOLLARD

Will you come down to the parlour, Mrs. Crilly?

MRS. CRILLY

Yes, I'll go down.

[*She remains seated, looking out steadily before her. Myles Gorman comes in. He is dressed in his own clothes.*

SCOLLARD

Well, Gorman, what brings you back to the ward?

GORMAN

I just want to do something to my pipes, Master.

SCOLLARD

Very well, Gorman. You have your discharge, and you are free to leave.

GORMAN

Oh, in a while I'll be taking the road.

[*He seats himself at the fire and begins to fix the bag of his pipes.*

SCOLLARD

Now, Mrs. Crilly, come down to the parlour.

MRS. CRILLY

Yes.

SCOLLARD

Anna is waiting to see you.

MRS. CRILLY (*rising*)

He will be well cared for here.

SCOLLARD

He will, Mrs. Crilly. I will give him all attention.

MRS. CRILLY

He expected to be in a different place to-day, but delay does little harm.

SCOLLARD

Come down to the parlour, Mrs. Crilly, and drink a glass of wine with us.

[*They go out. The door of the Select Ward opens, and Thomas Muskerry appears. He has got a stroke. His breathing makes a noise in his mouth. As he moves he lags somewhat at the right knee. He carries his right hand at his breast. He moves slowly across ward. Felix Tournour enters, carrying a bunch of keys.*

TOURNOUR

And where are you going?

MUSKERRY (*in a thickened voice*)

Ow — out. (*Motioning with left hand. He moves across ward, and goes out on door of corridor*)

TOURNOUR

Well, you're not getting back to your snuggery, my oul' cod. (*He goes into the Select Ward and begins to pitch Muskerry's belongings into the outer ward. First of all come the pillows and clothes off the bed*) And there's your holy picture, and there's your holy book. (*He comes out holding another book in official binding. He opens it and reads*) "Marianne, born May the 20th, 1870." (*He turns back some pages and reads*) Thomas Muskerry wrote this, 1850 —

"In the pleasant month of May,
When the lambkins sport and play,
As I roved out for recreation,
I spied a comely maid,
Sequestered in the shade,
And on her beauty I gazed in admiration.

"I said I greatly fear
That Mercury will draw near,
As once he appeared unto Venus,
Or as it might have been
To the Carthaginian Queen,
Or the Grecian Wight called Polyphemus."

[*Muskerry comes back to the ward. He stands looking stupidly at the heap Tournour has thrown out. Tournour throws down the book. Muskerry goes towards the open door of the ward. Felix Tournour closes the door deliberately, turns the key and holds the key in his hand.*

TOURNOUR

You have no more to do with your snug little ward, Mr. Muskerry. (*He puts the key on his bunch and goes out*)

MUSKERRY (*muttering with slack lips and cheeks*)

It's — it's — the pau — pauper's bed they've given me.

GORMAN (*turning round his face*)

Who's there?

MUSKERRY

It's — it's — Thomas Muskerry.

GORMAN

Is that the Master?

MUSKERRY

It's — it's the pauper's bed they've given me.

GORMAN

Can I give you any hand, Master?

MUSKERRY

I'll want to make — the bed. Give me a hand to make the bed. (*Gorman comes over to him*) My own sheet and blanket is here. I needn't lie on a pauper's sheet. Whose bed is this?

GORMAN

It's the middle bed, Master. It's my own bed.

MUSKERRY (*helplessly*)

What bed will I take, then?

GORMAN

My bed. I won't be here.

MUSKERRY

And where are you going?

GORMAN

I'm leaving the house this day. I'll be going on the roads.

MUSKERRY

Myles — Myles Gorman. The man that was without family or friends. Myles Gorman. Help me to lay down the mattress. Where will you sleep to-night, Myles Gorman?

GORMAN

At Mrs. Muirnan's, a house between this and the town of Ballinagh. I haven't the money to pay, but she'll give me the place for to-night. Now, Master, I'll spread the sheet for you.

[*They spread the sheet on the bed.*

MUSKERRY

Can you go down the stairs, Myles Gorman? I tried to get down the stairs and my legs failed me.

GORMAN

One of the men will lead me down.

MUSKERRY (*resting his hand on the bed and standing up*)

Sure one of the men will lead me down the stairs, too.

[*Myles Gorman spreads blanket on bed. He stands up, takes pipes, and is ready to go out. Muskerry becomes more feeble. He puts himself on the bed.*

MUSKERRY

Myles — Myles Gorman — come back.

GORMAN

What will I do for you, Master?

MUSKERRY

Say a prayer for me.

GORMAN

What prayer will I say, Master?

MUSKERRY

Say "God be good to Thomas Muskerry."

GORMAN (*taking off his hat*)

"God be good to Thomas Muskerry, the man who was good to the poor." Is that all, Master?

MUSKERRY

That's — that's all.

[*Gorman goes to the door.*

GORMAN

In a little while you'll hear my pipes on the road.

[*He goes out. There is the sound of heavy breathing from the bed. Then silence. The old pauper with the staff enters. He is crossing the ward when his attention is taken by the humming of the bees at the window pane. He listens for a moment.*

THE OLD PAUPER

A bright day, and the clay on their faces. That's what I saw. And we used to be coming from Mass and going to the coursing match. The hare flying and the dogs stretching after her up the hill. Fine dogs and fine men. I saw them all.

[*Christy Clarke comes in. He goes to table for his bag. He sees the figure on the bed, and goes over.*

CHRISTY

I'm going now, Mister Muskerry. Mister Muskerry!

Mister Muskerry! Oh! the Master is dead. (*He runs back to the door*) Mrs. Crilly. Mrs. Crilly. (*He goes back to the bed, and throws himself on his knees*) Oh! I'm sorry you're gone, Thomas Muskerry.

THE OLD PAUPER

And is he gone home, too! And the bees humming and all! He was the best of them. Each of his brothers could lift up their plough and carry it to the other side of the field. Four of them could clear a fair. But their fields were small and poor, and so they scattered.

[*Mrs. Crilly comes in.*

MRS. CRILLY

Christy Clarke, what is it?

CHRISTY

The Master is dead.

MRS. CRILLY

My God, my God!

CHRISTY

Will I go and tell them below?

MRS. CRILLY

No. Bring no one here yet. We killed him. When everything is known that will be known.

CHRISTY

I'll never forget him, I think.

MRS. CRILLY

What humming is that?

CHRISTY

The bees at the window pane. And there's Myles Gorman's pipes on the road.

[*The clear call of the pipes is heard.*

END OF PLAY

"Thomas Muskerry" was first produced on May 5th, 1910, by the Abbey Theater Company, at the Abbey Theater, Dublin, with the following cast: —

Thomas Muskerry	Arthur Sinclair
Mrs. Crilly	Sara Allgood
Crofton Crilly	J. M. Kerrigan
Albert Crilly	Eric Gorman
Anna Crilly	Maire O'Neill
Myles Gorman	Fred O'Donovan
Felix Tournour	Sydney Morgan
James Scollard	J. A. O'Rourke
Christy Clarke	U. Wright
Mickie Cripes	Fred Rowland
Tom Shanley	Ambrose Power
An Old Pauper	J. M. Kerrigan